Journal of European Baptist Studies

Publication – Three times per year

IBTSCENTRE
AMSTERDAM

IBTSC will host a Conference on **'Conflicting Convictions'** on **Tuesday 3rd and Wednesday 4th of November** 2015 in Baptist House, Amsterdam. This conference will explore disagreements among Christians on 'matters that matter' and responses to such. We are looking for papers that will explore conflict among people who claim to hold to the same Christian 'tradition': its nature, causes, risks, opportunities and how such can be responded to and dealt with. Papers can be offered from a range of perspectives, biblical, theological, historical, and practical. There is the opportunity following conference review to be published in our Journal, *Baptistic Theologies*. We invite contributions not only from more experienced writers and scholars but also from aspiring and developing scholars. To offer or to discuss the possibility of submitting a paper, please contact Dr. Stuart Blythe, blythe@ibts.eu.

There is no charge to attend the conference although there will be a small fee to cover lunch provision and participants are responsible for their own travel, food, and accommodation. At present, there are no bursaries to help people come but if a participant would be willing to contribute towards another person being able to come please be in touch.

The Conference will follow the delivery of the IBTSC Nordenhaug lectures on Monday 2nd November 2015. These will be delivered by Dr David P. Gushee – one of the leading moral voices in American Christianity. He is the Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics, Director of the Centre for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University, Atlanta & Macon, Georgia. Gushee is widely published author and editor of 20 books and hundreds of articles in his field, including *Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust*, *Kingdom Ethics* (with Glen Stassen), *The Sacredness of Human Life*. He will deliver three lectures on ''What it means to say that human life is sacred'.

Journal of European Baptist Studies

Volume 16   No. 1   September 2015

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Editorial

For fifteen years the *Journal of European Baptist Studies,* published by the editorial team of the International Baptist Theological Seminary of the European Baptist Federation, was located in Prague. This issue is published in Amsterdam under the auspices of the International Baptist Theological Study Centre. It marks a new beginning in our publication series. The journal cover is different in appearance but the mission of the journal and the composition of the Editorial Board and the International Consultant Editors have been retained.

Regular readers of this journal may have noticed that over the years we have been following a particular pattern of publishing articles in the first issue of each volume. We normally include articles from younger theologians or research students in theology. This is done deliberately in keeping with the mission of the journal to give a voice to younger scholars and to facilitate their integration into the academic environment. In this issue we include essays of two of the IBTS Master of Theology graduates—Øyvind Hadland and Daniel R. Karistai.

Dr Stuart Blythe's essay launches the collection with reflections on one of the distinctive practices of baptistic communities—that of prophetic preaching. His particular focus is on open-air preaching—a long and varied practice. He insists that it has been an undeservedly neglected practice in much homiletical literature and in the literature that explores preaching as performance. For him, open-air preaching is an example of radical street performance. In line with biblical prophetic preaching, such performances are ideologically committed events which are performed in the streets in order to seek to bring about some form of transformation within a contested space. Blythe invites the reader to explore further the value of open-air preaching as an expression of radical communication of the dramatic Christian gospel.

Building on his extensive experience as missionary among the Lahus of Southeast Asia, Hadland re-examines evangelical praxes of mission by probing into the theological perspectives on soteriology and anthropology underpinning such praxes. Based on his assessment of the narrative and communitarian strands in the work of Stanley J. Grenz, he argues for a holistic relational anthropology and praxes of mission, contextualised on the example of possible narrative praxes of mission in Lahu villages.

In his essay, Karistai takes a lead from St Athanasius' theology of the Incarnation to imagine the shape and style of a community that is formed by the dramatic event of the Word made flesh. He explores the questions of presence and location of such an incarnational community within an urban setting. He considers three loci of reference for the community: Eucharist, prayer and hospitality.

The Revd Doc Dr Parush R. Parushev
Senior Research Fellow, IBTS Centre in Amsterdam

Open-Air Preaching as Radical Street Performance

Stuart Blythe

Abstract: Open-air preaching is a neglected practice in much homiletical literature. This is also true in the literature which explores preaching as performance. It is, however, a long and varied practice. More than this, it can be explained as an example of radical street performance. Such performances are ideologically committed events which are performed in the streets in order to seek to bring about some form of transformation. In order to do this, performers have to contend with the streets as contested space. In such spaces they need to create audiences and negotiate a hearing. Viewing open-air preaching in this way creates a different perspective for exploring the value of such preaching as an expression of Christian communication.

Words: Homiletics, Street Preaching, Public Space, Art, Communication

Introduction

In this article I will argue that open-air preaching is a form of radical street performance.[1] To do this, I will first of all briefly locate this discussion within the field of homiletics. I will then demonstrate that although often viewed negatively, open-air preaching is a long and varied tradition. I will then describe what I mean by radical street performance and demonstrate why this is an appropriate way to understand open-air preaching. Finally, I will briefly conclude with the significance of understanding open-air preaching in this way.

To describe open-air preaching as radical street performance is to participate in the homiletical discussion about preaching as performance. In a previous article,[2] I indicated that to discuss preaching in performance terms is not new, although still contested. I will not repeat here the argument which I made there. I will simply affirm that I am prepared to stand with those homiletical scholars who defend the idea of preaching as performance in relation to the social sciences, etymology, history, Scripture, art, and theology. The problem with the vast majority of the performance homiletical literature, however, is that it operates on the one hand with a limited understanding of what constitutes preaching and on the other hand with a

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[1] This was the focus of my PhD research, 'Open Air Preaching as Radical Street Performance', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2009.

[2] Stuart Blythe, 'Collaborative Preaching as Community Theatre', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, Vol. 14:3 (May 2014), pp. 5-21.

limited understanding of what constitutes performance. Accordingly, in much of the literature preaching is exclusively presented as that which takes place in the context of a congregation gathered in liturgical assembly, normally in a building specifically set apart for that activity.[3] In turn, performance is frequently presented as that which takes place by performers on a stage in a theatre building set apart for the staging of such events. Such a focus, however, only represents one expression of preaching and one expression of performance. Open-air preaching, which takes place beyond the context of a congregation gathered in liturgical assembly, is an alternative genre of preaching. As such it requires a different understanding of performance than the theatre as traditionally understood.

Open-Air Preaching

It is a feature of most contemporary books on preaching that in one way or another they relate present in-church preaching to the practice as expressed in Scripture and the history of the Christian tradition. It is this relatedness to the history of the tradition that is seen to give present day preaching its validity as a Christian practice.[4] Open-air preaching can claim these same validating sources. Yet, it is a practice largely ignored in most contemporary academic homiletical work. In some senses this is understandable. If people in the Global North encounter preaching at all, it is likely to be in the context of some sort of liturgical gathering. The emphasis of homiletical writers reflects this. To neglect open-air preaching, however, limits our understanding of the historically broad nature of the preaching tradition. It also relegates much contemporary discussion to largely negative stereotypes.[5] Charles L. Campbell, one of the few contemporary homiletical writers who deal with open-air preaching in an academic way writes: 'The current image of street preaching has been shaped by angry, abusive preachers who seek to "save souls" by standing on street corners and shouting vitriolic, judgemental words of "hellfire and damnation".'[6] Yet, as Campbell goes on to argue: 'Just because street preaching has been abused, however, is no reason to dismiss it. If that were the case, we would also have to dismiss Sunday morning "pulpit preaching", which has certainly known

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[3] This remains true even if the building is only temporarily set apart for that purpose.

[4] Even some of those who would critique the current practices of preaching refer to Scripture and the tradition to make their argument, e.g. David C. Norrington, *To Preach or Not to Preach: The Church's Urgent Question*, revised ed. (Omaha, Nebr.: Ekklesia Press, 2013, 1996).

[5] Joshua Edelman in a recent study of the performance of religion in public concentrates exclusively on a limited number of negatively presented examples of contemporary American street preaching, 'The Intolerable, Intimate Public of Contemporary American Street Preaching', in Claire Maria Chambers, Simon W. Du Toit, and Joshua Edelman (eds.), *Performing Religion in Public* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), pp. 117-133.

[6] Charles L. Campbell, 'Street Preaching', in Stanley P. Saunders and Charles L. Campbell, *The Word on the Street: Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 95-107, 100.

its share of abuse'.[7] Despite such arguments, however, the practice of open-air preaching is given little attention with respect to any potential role in the church's present communicative strategies.

In contrast to the above neglect, it can be argued that open-air preaching is a practice with a long and diverse tradition.[8] To make this case involves drawing on a diverse range of sources including histories of preaching, older works, and the more popular literature from organisations that advocate the practice. Treated critically, such sources offer literature of advocacy over and against the prevailing literature of neglect.

One historic advocate of open-air preaching was Charles H. Spurgeon. In the late nineteenth century, he stated:

> There are some customs for which nothing can be pleaded, except that they are very old. In such cases antiquity is of no more value than rust upon a counterfeit coin. It is, however, a happy circumstance when the usage of ages can be pleaded for a really good scriptural practice, for it invests it with a halo of reverence.[9]

As indicated in this quotation, one of the recurring claims made by various advocates for open-air preaching, such as Spurgeon, is that it has a long history rooted in biblical practice.[10] Scriptural examples adduced in support of this claim by such writers include Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Amos, Jonah, Jesus, Peter, and Paul. It is a weakness of these writings that there is little scholarly discussion of the examples given. Yet the claims do not lack scholarly support. Thus, Hughes Oliphant Old, author of a multi-volume history of preaching writes:

> John the Baptist was not an institutional preacher who preached because society had given him that responsibility and had provided for him a parish, a pulpit, and a parsonage. John the Baptist was a charismatic preacher whom God's Spirit raised up as he had the prophets, to preach a unique message for a very particular time. Like the Methodists and the Franciscans, like the hermit preachers in the Eastern Orthodox churches, like the Pentecostal preachers of today, John the Baptist preached out-of-doors. He preached in the wilderness and people went out to hear him. The voice crying in the wilderness was a very special kind of preaching, and John the Baptist is the biblical figure for this

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[7] Ibid., p. 100.

[8] Campbell describes it as a 'long and lively tradition', 'Street Preaching', p. 96.

[9] Charles H. Spurgeon, 'Open Air Preaching—A Sketch of its History', in Charles H. Spurgeon, *Second Series of Lectures to My Students: Being Addresses Delivered to the Students of The Pastors College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1881), pp. 54-75, 54. This is the first of two lectures I will refer to. The significance of Spurgeon's lectures is not only as a historical source but that he is cited by a number of later advocates in defence of the practice.

[10] For example, Greville Ewing, *A Defence of Itinerant and Field Preaching: A Sermon Preached Before The Society for Gratis Sabbath Schools, On the 24th of December 1979, In Lady Glenorchy's Chapel, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: J. Ritchie, 1799) and Noel C. Gibson, *The Fisherman's Basket: Open-Air and Other Methods of Evangelism* (Drummoyne, NSW: Freedom in Christ Ministries, 1984), pp. 89-94.

kind of preaching. The voice crying in the wilderness has a special intensity because it is called forth directly by the Holy Spirit. It came from the white-hot burning bush of God's presence. Jesus too, was a charismatic preacher, a voice crying in the wilderness. Jesus could preach in the marketplace, on the mountainside, and beside the sea. Not everyone could do that. It takes a special charisma. Jesus could do it as John the Baptist could.[11]

Old here identifies open-air preaching as a particular expression of Christian preaching with varied historic manifestations rooted in the prophetic tradition and mediated through John the Baptist and Jesus into contemporary practice. The existence of such biblical precursors and their importance as 'paradigmatic' for historical and contemporary examples of open-air preaching is also highlighted by Campbell.[12]

Whether because they were not always welcome in traditional meeting places or because they sensed the missional drive of the gospel or because they announced the public claims of God's Word, the preachers in the Bible didn't wait for people to come to them to hear their proclamation; they instead took the Word to the people on the streets.[13]

Not all histories of Christian preaching begin with the Scriptural narratives and practice. Those that do, however, have to contend with the fact that Jesus and other biblical characters preached outdoors.[14] On the other hand, even those histories that do not begin with Scriptural examples acknowledge the historical examples of the practice. O. C. Edwards, Jr., in *A History of Preaching* does not start with Scriptural precursors and also develops a definition of preaching that essentially posits it exclusively as an activity which takes place in the context of a worshipping congregation.[15] He has, however, to admit the 'exception' of open-air preaching.[16] Consequently his history necessarily includes references to those who sometimes famously preached in the open air such as the Dominican and Franciscan friars, the Jesuits, George Whitfield, Charles Wesley, and the American Methodist Camp Meeting preachers.

Open-air preaching, is not simply a practice with a long tradition but is a very diverse practice. To be sure, since the eighteenth century revivalist preaching of Whitefield and Wesley, open-air preaching has been widely associated with evangelism understood as promoting a message of personal

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[11]   Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*: *The Biblical Period*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), p. 115.
[12] Campbell, 'Street Preaching', pp. 96-98, 104.
[13] Ibid., pp. 97-98.
[14] Ronald E. Osborn, *Folly of God: The Rise of Christian Preaching*: *A History of Christian Preaching*, vol. 1 (St Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1999), pp. 26 and 189.
[15] O. C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2004), pp. 3-4.
[16] Ibid., p. 4.

salvation. Later practitioners often appeal to their example and success.[17] Be this as it may, Whitefield and Wesley do not offer a uniform example of even evangelistic open-air preaching. They were divided on theology and differed in style.[18] In addition, the nature of the practice has varied considerably both before and following Whitefield and Wesley in relation to such matters as: the person of the preacher, their gender, their social status, the particular location in which they preached, their style, the content and purpose of their preaching, and the relationship of their preaching to other acts of worship.[19] Campbell in his essay on open-air preaching demonstrates variety by referring to examples including: St. Francis of Assisi (c.1181-1226), Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholic Vincentian motor mission, people involved in Civil Rights activities, and volunteers such as himself with the Open Door community in Atlanta.[20] His examples illustrate that different expressions of open-air preaching can have a variety of purposes including: 'Reform', 'Reconciliation', 'Resistance' and 'Solidarity with the poor'.[21]

This preceding discussion indicates that people have preached outdoors for a number of reasons. Sometimes it has been an enforced necessity. This may be due to preachers being denied freedom, recognition, buildings, and pulpits by the dominant church authorities. In Scotland this has been the case for the sixteenth century Reformers, post-Reformation Roman Catholics, seventeenth century Covenanters, and preachers involved in times of 'Secession' and 'Disruption'.[22] At other times, the reasons have been more practical. These include holding services such as Communion services in the open air to accommodate the large numbers who wished to attend.[23] Reasons could also be mundane. Webber in his account of Scottish preaching recounts the occasion when Duncan Macpherson (c.1711-1757), preached on the banks of the River Spey to members of the congregation on

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[17] For example, Godfrey Holden Pike, *Beneath the Blue Sky: Preaching in the Open-Air* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1888), pp. 183-209; *Open-Air Evangelism Training Manual* (Manchester: OAC, 2006), p. 10.

[18] Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 1991), pp. 125-127; Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Watts to Wesley to Maurice, 1690-1850*, vol. 3 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 160 and 172.

[19] The role of women in open-air preaching is an undeveloped area that requires more research.

[20] Campbell, 'Street Preaching', pp. 96-103.

[21] Ibid.

[22] J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, vol. 3 (London: Cassell, Peter, Galpin, 1877), p. 488; 'Historic Catholic Sites', [n.d.] provided by the Scottish Catholic Archives, 13/3/08, in response to an e-mail enquiry by author regarding Roman Catholic open-air preaching in Scotland; F. R. Webber, *History of Preaching In Britain and America: Including the Biographies of Many Princes of the Pulpit and the Men Who Influenced Them,* 3 vols., (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Publishing House, 1952-1957), vol. 2, pp. 107-146, 177, 262, 267, 315, 317.

[23] Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communions and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 11-50.

the other side because they could not cross to their place of worship because the river was in full spate.[24]

For some open-air preachers, however, whatever other factors and reasons have been involved, their driving motivation for preaching outdoors has been missionary. They have intentionally gone to the open air as public place where they could come into contact with those who would not normally be found in regular worship services.[25] In general terms this has been a motivation associated with a large number of historically significant open-air preachers including Celtic missionaries,[26] the preaching friars,[27] revivalist preachers such as Wesley and Whitefield,[28] and such groups as the Salvation Army.[29] Recognising that such preaching can be varied in terms of people, style, content, and purpose, it is this missionary motivated open-air preaching which is the focus of this article.

Open-Air Preaching as Radical Street Performance

In arguing that such missionary open-air preaching is a form of radical street performance I draw in particular upon the work of performance theorists Jan Cohen-Cruz and Baz Kershaw. Cohen-Cruz introduces and develops the concept of radical street performance. She uses the term in her international anthology, *Radical Street Performance*, to describe a wide range of public outdoor activities.[30] These activities include the performances of street singers, theatre companies, protest groups, and the witness of the mothers of the Plaza De Mayo. Cohen-Cruz's understanding is supplemented by bringing it into conversation not least with the ideas of leading British performance theorist Baz Kershaw.[31] His writing deepens the theoretical understanding of what Cohen-Cruz posits as radical street performance, particularly in relation to the post-modern context.

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[24] Webber, *History* vol. 2, p. 197.

[25] This is what Campbell refers to as the 'missional drive', 'Street Preaching', p. 97.

[26] Webber, *History* vol. 1, pp. 29-108.

[27] Something of the missionary nature of these preachers is indicated not least in the thirteenth century work by Humbert of Romans, (c. 1200-1277) entitled 'Treatise on the Formation of Preachers' and in particular the section on 'Things Involved in Good Performance', contained in *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, ed. by Simon Tugwell (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 183-370, in particular, pp. 253-256.

[28] '*Journal* entry for Monday 2nd April, 1739' in *The Works of John Wesley, Journal and Diaries II (1738-1743)*, vol. 19, ed. by W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 46; John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.A.* (Salem, Mass.: Cushing and Appleton, 1801), p. 22.

[29] Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2001) is among the literature which indicates the missionary nature of Salvation Army open-air preaching.

[30] *Radical Street Performance: An International Anthology*, ed. by Jan Cohen-Cruz (London: Routledge, 1998).

[31] The primary works by Baz Kershaw upon which I draw are *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (London: Routledge, 1992), and *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999).

It is Cohen-Cruz who provides the definition of what constitutes radical street performance:

> By *radical* I refer to acts that question or re-envision ingrained social arrangements of power. *Street* signals theatrics that take place in public by-ways with minimal constraints on access. *Performance* here indicates expressive behaviour intended for public viewing. It includes but is not limited to theatre, which typically keeps actors and spectators in their respective places through the representational conventions supporting a pre-set script. Radical street performance draws people who comprise a contested reality into what its creators hope will be a changing script.[32]

This definition forms the basis for the following discussion and correlation of radical street performance and open-air preaching. Each of the three aspects 'radical', 'street', and 'performance' are discussed in turn. It is, however, in the dynamic interplay of the three that the radical street performance event happens.

The Radical

The 'radical' in radical street performance refers to several specific features of such performances. One of these is their transformational intent. Thus, Cohen-Cruz states, 'By *radical* I refer to acts that question or re-envision ingrained social arrangements of power'. Kershaw offers a similar understanding of what constitutes the radical with respect to performance. In his earlier work, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention,* he focuses on radical theatre groups in Britain between the 1960s and 1990s who sought 'to change not just the future action of their audiences, but also the structure of the audience's community and the nature of the audience's culture'.[33] Accordingly, he describes radical performances as acts of 'cultural intervention'.[34] In this intervention they seek to challenge and change the existing ideologies present in the culture of the particular community or society being addressed.[35] With reference to post-modern critiques this does not necessitate the understanding of a 'singular' all embracing ideology in cultures. Rather, it recognises the possible plurality of competing dominant ideologies. Although competing, however, these different ideologies can be mutually reinforcing creating the '*status quo*' of the way things are. In contrast to this *status quo*, radical performances offer alternative and oppositional ideas, contending for a space in the culture or seeking to change the dominant ideologies that exist. Radical performances, therefore, 'have ideological designs on their audiences'.[36] In his later work,

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[32] Jan Cohen-Cruz, 'Introduction', in Cohen-Cruz, *Radical*, pp. 1-6, 1.
[33] Kershaw, *Politics*, p. 2.
[34] Ibid., p. 7.
[35] Ibid., pp. 18-21.
[36] Ibid., p. 21.

The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard, while desiring to sit on the 'cusp' between the modern and post-modern understandings of performance, he draws on a quotation from Raymond Williams to assert that radical is a term concerned with 'the need for vigorous and fundamental change'.[37]

A fascinating further aspect of radical street performance highlighted in the literature is their potentially 'transcendent' nature. This is hinted at in the anthology offered by Cohen-Cruz in the article by Marguerite Waller.[38] Waller describes the performances and counter performances of the respective groups supporting and opposing the crossing of 'illegal aliens' from Mexico to the United States of America in 1989. In this article, talking about the supporters of Mexican workers, she writes that in the performance of their actions they tapped into the 'spiritual' power that such an occasion can provide.[39] As narrated, this power, at least in the lives of the performers Comadre Aida Mancillas and Comadre Cindy Zimmerman, created a space in which, 'something wonderful occurred'.[40] This "something wonderful" involved them in overcoming their own fears and participating in actions that, however beneficial to others, were also existentially freeing to them. The suggestion, therefore, is that through the radical nature of such events, people by their participation in them can have experiences that transcend the actual activities and their primary intended purposes.

It is Kershaw rather than Cohen-Cruz who explicitly uses the language of the 'transcendent' in relation to the transformational quality of the radical in radical performances.[41] Kershaw means by this that radical performances in the process of the performance have the potential to create a freedom that goes beyond either the ideologies being opposed or advocated. Such a freedom, he claims, can create 'currently unimaginable forms of association and action' that can be experienced by both performers and spectators.[42] This correlates with the experience of the two Comadres as narrated by Waller. One of the most helpful examples that Kershaw gives of the radical as transcendent relates to the activities of about forty children who were participating in the *Glasgow All Lit Up!* procession directed by John Fox, the founder of Welfare State in 1980.[43] As the procession advanced, the group of children started to follow a course of their own making in some sort of shared, leaderless, directionless but not lost, celebratory act of

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[37] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976), p. 210, cited in Kershaw, *Politics*, p. 18.
[38] Marguerite Waller, 'From Border Boda or Divorce Fronterizo?', in Cohen-Cruz, *Radical*, pp. 86-89.
[39] Ibid., p. 87.
[40] Ibid., p. 88.
[41] Kershaw, *Radical*, p. 18.
[42] Ibid., p. 18.
[43] Ibid., p. 74.

communitas.[44] So read, these children were experiencing and expressing a freedom that transcended the event itself and their allocated part in it. For Kershaw, therefore, the transcendent in the radical relates to the potential in the performance for the radical to 'reach beyond' itself in the experience of the participants and/or spectators in what is being produced.[45]

For Cohen-Cruz and Kershaw, therefore, the radical refers to the transformative intent of ideologically committed performances which take place in the street. These performances in various ways seek to change the *status quo* through their interventions. The nature of such performances, however, not least given the location of the streets, is such that their impact may transcend the intent of the performers.

Open-air preaching takes place from an ideologically committed position with the purpose of bringing some sort of transformation in the prevailing cultural context in which it performs. Historically and in the contemporary context much of it is concerned with seeking the personal transformation of individuals. Even when this is the case, however, there can be wider attendant social concerns. James Haldane preached in the open-air in Scotland not least in the period 1797-1805.[46] His primary intended audience were those who for various reasons did not know the gospel as he and other Evangelicals understood it. His goal, therefore, was to warn them to 'flee from the wrath to come, and not to rest in an empty profession of religion'.[47] He invited them to do so by experiencing new birth by the Spirit through belief in the person of Jesus Christ 'who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree'.[48] In turn, however, he believed that this personal transformation of individuals would be good for the stability, order, and security of society. He wrote,

> Influenced, however, by the doctrines of the gospel, the lion becomes a lamb, and those who in times past were almost continually in all evil, become ready to do every good word and work. They are now taught effectually to deny all ungodliness; and, seeking to promote the welfare of all around them, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world.[49]

Allowing for the conservative social concern, Haldane's example demonstrates that seeking the personal transformation of individuals may

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[44] Ibid., p. 77.

[45] Ibid., p. 18.

[46] For a detailed discussion see Stuart Blythe, 'James Haldane's Open-Air Preaching, 1797-1805', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 46 (January 2015), pp. 27-43.

[47] Letter to the Editor from the 'Persons engaged in the Scotch Itinerancy', *Missionary Magazine* (July 1797), pp. 335-336, 336.

[48] J. Haldane, *Journal of a Tour Through the Northern Counties of Scotland and the Orkney Isles, in Autumn 1779: Undertaken with a view to Promote the Knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: J. Ritchie, 1798), pp. 4-5.

[49] Ibid., p. 97.

well be accompanied by wider social concerns. Other expressions may be more socially directed. One historic example is George MacLeod, the founder of the Iona Community, who preached in the streets of Glasgow Govan in the 1930s in opposition to communism and British rearmament, and later preached in the open-air in opposition to nuclear weapons.[50] More contemporaneously, Campbell and his colleagues preached outdoors in solidarity with the poor and in opposition to the structures and systems that were seen as oppressing them.[51] Open-air preaching, therefore, expresses the 'radical' of radical street performances as it performs cultural intervention in the direction of change.

The practice of open-air preaching also has the potential for participating in the transcendent of the radical as described above. On one level such a connection may be obvious. Open-air preaching activities are often conceived by the participants as involving matters of the 'Spirit'. Accordingly, there can be a considerable emphasis placed on such things as the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and the Word if the preaching is to be effective. Spurgeon encouraged his students that, 'The occasion will frequently suggest the fittest thing to say, and we may also fall back on the Holy Spirit who will teach us in the self-same hour what we shall speak'.[52] Likewise, Open Air Campaigner materials emphasise: 'Prayer is the key to the Christian's life and ministry. We must always keep in mind that the battle will be won on our knees. Before we speak to men about God, we must speak to God about men'.[53] From a different theological position, Chris Michael an 'experienced pastor' is quoted by Campbell as saying, 'On the street there is always the possibility that the spoken Word will cast out a demon or confront evil in such a way that open spiritual warfare will result'.[54] While performance activists may not be so keen to align their description of the spiritual experienced in activist performances to such overt Christian language and practices, theatre theorist John Fletcher in his book *Preaching to Convert* also interestingly makes this connection.[55]

Following on from the above, however, the idea that the nature of performing in the streets can somehow create a particular freedom in which

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[50] For a more detailed discussion of MacLeod's open-air preaching see, Stuart Blythe, 'George MacLeod's Open-Air Preaching: Performance and Counter-Performance', *Theology in Scotland* XVIII (Spring, 2011), pp. 21-33.
[51] Campbell, 'Street Preachings', pp. 102-104.
[52] Charles Spurgeon, 'Open Air Preaching—Remarks Thereon' in Charles H. Spurgeon, *Second Series of Lectures to My Students: Being Addresses Delivered to the Students of The Pastors College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1881), pp. 76-95, 95.
[53] 'Open Air Campaigners Evangelism Training Manual: Biblical Principles Designed to Help You Effectively Present the Gospel Message' (Nazareth, Pa.: Open Air Campaigners, n.d.), p. 1.
[54] Cited, Campbell, 'Street Preaching', p. 106.
[55] John Fletcher*, Preaching to Convert: Evangelical Outreach and Performance Activism in a Secular Age* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2013), p. 189.

participants are drawn into an experience that transcends their own intention is also evidenced in the practice of open-air preaching. On this the contribution of Campbell is particularly illustrative. He describes the event of a student preaching in the street for the first time.[56] Before she begins she is fearful to the point of nausea. In the performance of street preaching, however, she experienced and expressed energy, a passion, and a boldness she had never known before. The student wrote to her boyfriend, 'I preached on the street today. It was exhilarating'.[57] Others commented, '"We've never seen that side of you." "What happened?".'[58] Campbell states, 'Somehow, the street had freed Melanie to preach in a way she had never before imagined.'[59] In this account we have a description of a liberating existential experience. This experience relates in several respects closely to the 'spiritual' experience of the Comadres as narrated by Waller and the concept of the transcendent nature of the radical as suggested by Kershaw. In open-air preaching, therefore, as in other radical street performances, the transcendent quality of the event can relate not simply to what is achieved through the event but to the impact of participation in the existential experience of the performer.

Despite the above it may be objected that the comparison between open-air preaching and radical street performance as an event of radical cultural intervention fails because this term is usually applied to activities related to left-wing politics. Both Cohen-Cruz and Kershaw, however, eschew the idea that the concept of the radical only applies to activities from a particular ideological position.[60] More recently and more explicitly, although also from a performance perspective, John Fletcher argues very strongly that evangelistic activities including seeking the personal conversion of individuals should be regarded as examples of 'performance activism', an umbrella term that also embraces radical street performance.[61] The application of the radical in radical street performance to open-air preaching , therefore, is quite appropriate insofar as such preachers 'seek to produce effects through the transaction they initiate, namely a fundamental change in the world- and life views of their audiences'.[62]

The Streets

Another area in which congruence can be demonstrated between radical street performance and open-air preaching is with respect to the location in which these practices take place. Both take place outdoors, in the streets. The

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[56] Campbell, 'Street Preaching', pp. 95-96.
[57] Ibid., p. 96.
[58] Ibid., p. 95.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Cohen-Cruz, 'Introduction', p. 2; Kershaw, *Radical*, p. 18.
[61] Fletcher, *Preaching,* pp. 15-45.
[62] Fletcher, *Preaching*, p. 17.

term, 'the streets', can convey primarily an urban setting. It need not mean this, however. It is a term used colloquially in performance studies to refer to outdoor 'public spaces'.[63]

According to Cohen-Cruz, radical street performers see the 'streets' as 'public by-ways with minimal constraints on access'.[64] As a consequence of this they consider that the streets offer them the potential for reaching a broader and more diverse audience than would be found in theatre buildings. Kershaw accordingly describes performances outside of theatre buildings as a 'profoundly public genre'.[65] By this he means that they are performances that take place in a wider cultural context than that which is established and defined by in-theatre space. The term "profoundly" indicates a qualitative difference in the public nature of the streets in terms of access and freedom, compared to in-building activities.

The notion that the streets offer performers access to a general public audience is not without problems. Public space is on the decrease. Most space belongs to someone and has greater and lesser degrees of access for certain groups. There is no homogenous mass public to be reached. Street performers may often attract a regular following. Their message may only be heard by the already committed. In addition, the theatre itself has a broad range of audiences.[66] In response, however, several things can be said. First, by going to where people are gathered for other purposes, street performers have at least the potential of bringing performances to those who may never attend a theatre building. Second and critically, since radical street performances are ideologically committed, one of their purposes is to communicate their message to the uninformed, the uninterested, the unconvinced, and the opposed. In engaging with such groups among the public, radical street performers play precisely before those who would be least likely to voluntarily attend a theatre or other event sponsoring such a message. Third, the mobility of street performers allows them actively to seek out diverse groups beyond those who would gather in buildings.[67] Fourth, the media attention created by the interventionist nature of radical street performances may provide an 'indirect conduit to broad and diverse audiences'.[68] It may be rhetorical hyperbole to describe the streets as the 'gateway to the masses'.[69] The streets, however, do offer radical street performers a space in which they have the potential for variously reaching

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[63] Bradford D. Martin, *The Theatre Is In The Streets: Politics and Performance in Sixties America* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), p. 3.
[64] Cohen-Cruz, 'Introduction', p. 1.
[65] Kershaw, *Radical*, p. 7.
[66] Some of these issues are raised by Cohen-Cruz, 'Introduction', pp. 2-3.
[67] Ibid. p. 2.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

with their message those who may not voluntarily seek out the communication of that message in other places.

For open-air preachers a frequent motivation is the desire to reach a wider audience with the Christian message than can be achieved by in-church preaching. Spurgeon stated it clearly, '*The great benefit of open-air preaching is that we get so many new comers to hear the gospel who otherwise would never hear it*'.[70] In more poetic prose he writes: 'Some of our brethren are prosing on and on, to empty pews and musty hassocks, while they might be conferring lasting benefits upon hundreds by quitting the old walls for awhile, and seeking living stones for Jesus'.[71]

For Donald Soper, the famous twentieth century British open-air preacher, it was about 'getting to the outsider'.[72] Mike Sprenger, another advocate for open-air preaching writes that not only does open-air preaching allow the church to 'reach large numbers of people' but that these people include those 'who have no contact with Christianity or church members'.[73] Similarly, open-air preaching advocate Ken Gaskell states, 'it gives us the opportunity to bring our message to a wider audience'.[74] Open-air preachers, therefore, as with radical street performers, view the streets as a gateway to publics beyond those who their in-building performances have little possibility of reaching.

Another point of connection between the practices of open-air preaching and radical street performance relates to the way in which the streets are understood. In both practices the streets can be understood as contested space.[75] Cohen-Cruz, as already noted, writes that the purpose of radical street performances is to draw people 'who comprise a contested reality into what its creators hope will be a changing script'.[76] The streets are the site of that contested reality. Street performers place themselves physically in the midst of the contest. This can take the form of entertaining and inspiring strikers gathered outside their workplaces, of standing outside government buildings, of directly confronting opponents, or of inhabiting the site of perceived offences.[77] Kershaw for his part indicates that radical performances as acts of social engagement and cultural intervention can take

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[70] Spurgeon, 'Remarks', italics Spurgeon, p. 78.

[71] Ibid., p. 79.

[72] Brian Frost, *Goodwill on Fire: Donald Soper's Life and Mission* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), p. 106.

[73] Mike Sprenger, *Presenting Jesus in the Open Air* (Milton Keynes, U.K.: Word, 1988), p. 14.

[74] Ken Gaskell, *Open-Air Evangelism Today* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1997), p. 3.

[75] For an introduction to some of the ways in which space as related to specific sites can be contested, *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, ed. by Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1988), particularly, pp. 245-298.

[76] Cohen-Cruz, 'Introduction', p. 1.

[77] These are some of the activities recorded in the anthology by Cohen-Cruz.

place directly on 'alien territory'.[78] An example of this is the anti-war messages that the *Welfare State* political theatre group sought to communicate in the armament dependent town of Barrow in Furness in the 1980s.[79] In his later work, he suggests that the streets in particular are the most likely places to demonstrate changing cultural patterns and colliding paradigms.[80] A poignant example he gives of this is the lone man with his shopping bags in hand standing in the way of the progress of the tanks as part of the Tiananmen protests in China in 1989.[81]

In writing about open-air preaching Spurgeon demonstrates an awareness of the streets as contested space because some will welcome preaching there and some will not.[82] More than this, however, he encourages preachers to go specifically to those areas of the city 'which lie out of the route of decency, and are known to nobody but the police, and to them principally through bruises and wounds'.[83] This is a spiritual battle for 'Soldiers of Christ' against the legions of hell.[84] From an alternative theological reading, Saunders and Campbell also offer a helpful and explicit understanding of open-air preaching as performing in contested space. Accordingly, the streets are posited as the site of conflict between the 'reign of God' and the 'powers and principalities' of the world'.[85] In this reading, however, the powers and principalities are understood with reference not to literal supernatural deities but to structures and institutions that are life denying rather than life enhancing.[86] In their own situation, they relate this particularly to settings where institutions and organisation conspire against the poor and the homeless. For them, open-air preaching is to enter the contest of the streets with an ideology shaped by the Word. It is to preach with 'resistance' and 'hope' before the powers that will be encountered in the streets.[87] It is to participate in the '"collision" between the gospel and the world'.[88] Although possible of various theological understandings, therefore, open-air preaching like radical street performances is a practice that in entering the public space from a position of ideological commitment, engages in the contested nature of such space.

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[78] Kershaw, *Politics*, p. 7.
[79] Ibid., pp. 206-242.
[80] Ibid., p. 7.
[81] Ibid., pp. 117-119.
[82] Spurgeon, 'Remarks', p. 88.
[83] Ibid. p. 87.
[84] Ibid. pp. 87 and 95.
[85] Stanley P. Saunders and Charles L. Campbell, 'Conversions in Context: A Road Map', in Saunders and Campbell, *The Word*, p. 6.
[86] Their reading of what constitutes the principalities and powers referred to in the Scriptures is shaped and influenced by the work of William Stringfellow and Walter Wink whereby such are interpreted in terms of life denying structures and institutions in society.
[87] Charles L. Campbell, 'The Streets, the Powers, and the Word: Learning from William Stringfellow', in Saunders and Campbell, *Word*, pp. 63-85.
[88] Campbell, 'Street Preaching', p. 106.

To be sure as Cohen-Cruz acknowledges, entering the contest of the streets may demonstrate 'arrogance'. It involves imposing views upon others and making them unwilling spectators.[89] It also, however, requires 'bravery'. This bravery involves an altruistic willingness to 'offer one's body for some common goal, without the safety of an impermeable frame'.[90] Her anthology records something of the legal, social, verbal, and physical risks that radical street performers face. Their actions require nothing less than the embodied performance of physical presence in contested space.

Risk-taking embodied presence is also a feature of open-air preaching. Spurgeon records both the verbal and physical hardships and opposition endured by open-air preachers of the past and encourages those to whom he is writing to be prepared, to face them likewise.[91] Such risks and the willingness to face them, however, are not simply a feature of historical record. It still requires 'brazenness and audacity' to preach in the streets.[92] Chris Erdman, another of the few contemporary writers who deals positively with open-air preaching, albeit in a few pages, writes, 'But let us not be naïve. Street preaching is not safe'; it requires 'people gutsy enough to bleed in the street'.[93] Shared among such authors, albeit from their different historical settings and theological perspectives, is the conviction that such difficulties in the practice are to be related to identification with the way of Jesus Christ and his crucifixion.[94] Erdman states the matter as follows:

> Preaching in the streets, we and our people will learn the cruciform way of Jesus in the world. We will follow Jesus, 'the faithful witness' (Revelation 1:5), or more literally translated, 'faithful *martyr'*, in the world, for the love of the world and for the saving of the world—and that will mean from time to time being pitched into the teeth of rejection, hatred, violence and death itself for the sake of the Word's mission in the world.[95]

In this respect of being embodied performance in the contested reality of the streets, it can be argued that the practice of open-air preachers is closer to the practice of other radical street performers than it is to in-church preaching.

Performance

The third area where there is a clear convergence between radical street performance and open-air preaching is with respect to their nature as performances. To assert this, however, involves first of all defining what is

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[89] Cohen-Cruz, 'Introduction', p. 3.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Spurgeon, 'Sketch', pp. 54-75, 'Remarks', pp. 87-91.
[92] Chris Michael cited in Campbell, 'Street Preaching', p. 107.
[93] Chris Erdman, *Countdown to Sunday: A Daily Guide for those Who Dare to Preach* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2007), p. 120.
[94] See Spurgeon on Christopher Hodge and his sufferings, 'Remarks', p. 88 and Campbell, 'Street Preaching', p. 107.
[95] Erdman, *Countdown*, p. 120, italics, Erdman.

meant by performance and then demonstrating the congruence. This can be done with respect to at least three aspects of performance as explicated by theorists such as Cohen-Cruz and Kershaw. These aspects are first, performance as dramatic, expressive, public behaviour; second, performance as the convergence of art, ideology, and everyday life; and third, performance as creating an audience and negotiating a hearing.

Cohen-Cruz defines performance as 'expressive public behaviour intended for public viewing'.[96] This resonates with the expansive understanding of performance as advanced in the developing discipline of performance studies where performance at its broadest signifies 'showing doing' and can embrace all of life.[97] The definition by Cohen-Cruz, therefore, indicates the influence of this broad understanding of performance, yet includes the qualifiers of 'expressive' and 'intentional'. This shows a desire to avoid what Kershaw calls the 'theoretical abyss' created by the fact that if everything is a performance then nothing really is performance.[98] Avoiding the abyss is a matter of negotiating between the '*limitations*' of theatre traditionally and institutionally understood and the '*limitlessness*' of performance as referring to all human activity.[99] Kershaw, therefore, defines performance as 'cultural presentations that have recognisable theatrical components'. What he means by 'recognisable theatrical components' is that the activity 'frames' in some way its nature as an expressive and 'constructed' public event.[100]

For both Cohen-Cruz and Kershaw, therefore, performance is a concept not limited to the description of plays enacted by actors on artificially constructed stages in buildings. It can equally and perhaps better describe a wide gamut of purposeful, expressive human behaviours that through the nature of their dramatic actions draw attention to themselves and thus to their ideological commitments. Thus, in terms of street events it can be used to describe such events as political protests, processions, the silent holding up of pictures by the mothers of the disappeared, the theatrical activities of ideologically committed groups such as ACT UP and Welfare State, and the entertaining and inspiring of strikers through political songs.[101]

It would seem hard to deny that open-air preaching is performance in terms of being expressive and purposeful behaviour. It intentionally presents itself as an event to be seen and heard in public. With greater and lesser degrees of conscious theatricality it presents itself through form and content

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[96] Cohen-Cruz, 'Introduction', p. 1.
[97] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 28.
[98] Kershaw, *Radical*, p. 15.
[99] Ibid., italics Kershaw.
[100] Ibid.
[101] These are among the sort of events described and discussed by Cohen-Cruz and Kershaw.

as preaching. The types of theatrical components that frame it can variously include the wearing of clerical dress, the use of a small pulpit, the holding of a bible, beginning with a prayer or a song, the monologue style, the constructed nature of the talk, the volume used, the accompanying literature, the terms of address, and, of course, the content, which frequently not only names but invokes the authority of God.

Yet more can be said, and indeed for Cohen-Cruz and Kershaw performance is not only dramatic, expressive, and purposeful behaviour but is something in which there is a convergence of art, ideology, and everyday life. That is, in radical street performances there is a collapsing of traditional theatre distinctions such as between art and ideological activism, performer and spectator, and the staged life and real life. This is what is signalled in the reference by Cohen-Cruz that radical street performance moves beyond traditional theatre practices which 'keep actors and spectators in their respective places through presentational conventions supporting a pre-set script'.[102] It is also the understanding that undergirds the work of Kershaw in his desire to focus on performance rather than theatre with its various attendant in-building conventions. Accordingly, such performances and their advocates are often variously critical of the limitations of traditional and institutional expressions of theatre to bring about change.[103]

When it comes to preaching Richard F. Ward indicates awareness of the difficulties in describing it as artistic communication when he writes: 'All forms of human speech are *potentially* aesthetic, depending on how the speaker intends communication, what the definition of "art" is in a particular culture, and how it is received by an audience'.[104]

Be this as it may, and while this invites further discussion, not only writers like Ward who advance preaching as performance but other homileticians, albeit perhaps without further explication, advance preaching as in some sense an 'art' form.[105] Preachers use this art to communicate their ideological convictions. This is true of in-church preachers as well as open-air preachers. Open-air preachers, however, take that which may be considered an art in the context of the liturgy and expose both style and content to critique and contest in the midst of the reality of peoples' lives. In this sense, like other radical street performance, open-air preaching occurs in the midst of every-day life.[106] There it functions as ideologically committed activism challenging the *status quo*. Included in this challenge

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[102] Cohen-Cruz, 'Introduction', p. 1.

[103] Kershaw, *Radical*, pp. 29-56.

[104] Richard F. Ward, *Speaking of the Holy: The Art of Communication in Preaching* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2001), p. 22, italics Ward.

[105] Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (eds.), *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005).

[106] Campbell, 'Street Preaching', p. 99 with reference to a citation from Soren Kierkegaard.

can be an implicit or explicit critique of the church and open-air preaching has often been associated with periods of reform and renewal in the life of the church.[107]

Perhaps, however, one of the most fascinating connections between radical street performance and open-air preaching in respect to the collapsing of traditional distinctions is with regards to the way in which it reconfigures the relationship between preacher and audience. On the one hand, open-air preaching can be presented as forcing one's views on an unwilling audience. The offence of this can be given greater piquancy when and where the message presents the audience as somehow fundamentally 'ignorant', 'deficient', or 'spiritually deviant'.[108] In response, however, at least two things can be said. First, all forms of radical street performance that aim at change are by definition operating from an assumed distance between their more informed and ideologically correct selves and the situations and peoples they seek to change. Secondly, it can be argued that generally in the open-air the audience are much less confined physically, conventionally, and doctrinally in relation to the preacher than are most in-church congregations. By performing in the streets open-air preachers not only preach out-with the regular conventions of building, worship, and congregation, but in a context where the listeners have considerable freedom to respond, react, and reject. They can show displeasure by walking away.[109] They can control the nature and content of the performance by welcome or unwelcome interruption and vocal participation.[110] As with other radical street performances, therefore, the interaction with and the reaction of the audience are critical features of the performance. Different open-air preachers will handle this in different ways but handle it they must. Donald Soper considered such interaction including genuine heckling to be essential to the 'dynamism' of his speaking.[111]

The above arguments lead on to the third area of congruence between radical street performances and open-air preaching in relation to the nature of performance. This is the need to create audiences and negotiate a hearing. Cohen-Cruz writes of radical street performances that, 'Rallies, puppet shows, marches, vigils, choruses and clown shows are just some of the forms used to capture both media and popular attention in a plethora of different contexts'.[112] The intention of such performances is to reach beyond the already committed. To do so, the attention of potential audiences needs to be gained. The dramatic actions adopted for this purpose, however, as indicated

[107] Ibid., pp. 100-101.
[108] Edelman, 'Intolerable', p. 118.
[109] Spurgeon, 'Remarks', p. 89.
[110] Donald Soper, *Advocacy of the Gospel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), pp. 72-73.
[111] Frost, *Goodwill*, p. 106.
[112] Cohen-Cruz, *Radical*, p. 3.

by Cohen-Cruz, have to be activities suited to the particular context of the streets, such as rallies, marches, and vigils. Likewise, the artistic behaviours enacted, need to be dramatic and appropriate for street performance. More generally, in her analysis of radical street performances, Cohen-Cruz offers five broad categories of street performance forms: agit-prop, witness, integration, utopia, and tradition.[113] In terms of how each of these approaches identified by Cohen-Cruz functions in creating an audience and negotiating a hearing, it can be said that they confront, show, involve, inspire, and invite, respectively.[114]

Kershaw highlights the radical performance forms of carnival and agit-prop, and suggests that a number of political alternative theatre groups used a hybrid form of celebratory agit-prop.[115] This hybrid approach, he argues, was a response to the necessity that ideologically committed performers have to gather an audience and engage in an ideological negotiation with them.[116] As a consequence, such groups:

> aimed to combine entertainment with—well, if not instruction (*pace* Brecht) then debate, discussion, socio-political proposals and recommendations…The companies making this theatre aimed to combine art and action, aesthetics and pragmatics.[117]

In part, in radical performances entertainment is necessary to gain interest and gather an audience. In part, it is necessary to break away from the idea that ideological performances are humourless.[118] In this understanding, entertainment and achieving efficacy, through influencing change, are not viewed as binary opposites as is implied in some of the preaching as performance writings. They are, rather, considered different parts of the same continuum.[119]

The task that ideologically committed performers face in creating an audience and negotiating a hearing can be discussed at another level still. The goal of ideologically committed performers is to facilitate an 'ideological transaction' between them and their audiences in the direction of change.[120] For this to occur, however, performers require in various ways to connect with the ideas, values, and traditions, of their audiences.[121] The

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[113] Cohen-Cruz gives an initial description of these different forms in the 'Introduction' to her work, pp. 4-5.

[114] This is my reading of her categories in terms of their gathering and communicating functions based upon what she writes about these categories in the introduction and throughout the anthology.

[115] Kershaw, *Politics*, pp. 67-92.

[116] Ibid., p. 18.

[117] Ibid., p. 5.

[118] Ibid., p. 77.

[119] Schechner, discusses this understanding that entertainment and efficacy are not opposites, *Performance*, pp. 79-80.

[120] Kershaw, *Politics*, p. 16.

[121] Ibid. p. 21.

challenge for the radical performers is to do this without becoming fully incorporated into the ideologies and values which they seek to change.[122] Or to put that slightly differently, ideologically committed performers have to navigate the paradox of being both popular and radical.[123] If they cannot navigate this, on the one hand, they may have no audience or on the other hand, they may fail to communicate their own convictions.

Open-air preachers, like radical street performers, are diverse in their variety. In preaching in the streets, however, they cannot avoid the issues of creating audiences and negotiating ideological transactions with the audiences they create. The example and writings of some notable open-air preachers demonstrate the ways in which they recognised and responded to these issues.

George Whitefield exploited theatrics to the full as a strategy for open-air preaching.[124] This allowed him to compete for the attention of people not in churches but in public spaces, to compete not with other preachers but with market traders, to compete not for people's sacred time but for people's leisure time. In so doing, like radical street performers, he combined 'edification' with 'entertainment'.[125] As he sought for an audience the use of his body was a key visual component in his performances. 'The words were a scaffold over which the body climbed, stomped, cavorted, and kneeled, all in an attempt—as much intuitive as contrived—to startle and completely overtake his listeners.'[126]

In contrast to Whitefield, Spurgeon shows a resistance to overly dramatic actions which he typifies as: 'the wild-raving-maniac action which some are so fond of, which seems to be a cross between Whitefield with both his arms in the air, and Saint George with both his feet violently engaged in trampling on the dragon'.[127]

He states, rather, that the actions of a preacher should be 'purely natural and unconstrained'.[128] This notwithstanding, Spurgeon writes explicitly aware that, 'it must be viewed as an essential part of a sermon that somebody should hear it'. He continues, 'it cannot be a great benefit to the world to have sermons preached *in vacuo*'.[129] As a consequence of this and despite his convictions concerning the work of God in preaching, Spurgeon gives considerable practical advice on how people should preach in the

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[122] Ibid. p. 8.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Harry S. Stout*, The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 68.
[125] Ibid. p. xvi.
[126] Ibid., p. 40.
[127] Spurgeon, 'Remarks', pp. 91-92.
[128] Ibid. p. 91.
[129] Ibid. p. 89.

specific context of the open-air. This advice ranges from matters of choosing the location, to the volume of voice, to the content of the message, to the structure of sermons, to the length of sentences, to the use of wit.[130] Soper is clear that the 'technique' and 'format' of open-air preaching 'are contained within a secular environment rather than a spiritual one'.[131] As a consequence of this, it is a '*sui generis*' and the failure of many people is to think that it is the same as preaching in the church, whereas nothing can be further from the truth.[132] As to the techniques required, Soper draws attention to proper volume of voice, how to speak to a moving crowd, and the readiness to be led by the interest and interactions of the audience.[133]

It can of course be argued such as by Joshua Edelman that in the current context the 'magnetism of the performance' that used to attract the crowds to open-air preaching has gone. As a consequence contemporary open-air preachers emphasise the theological distance between themselves and their audiences.[134] It may be true to say that at least some open-air preachers can use theological reasons such as the 'blindness' of their audiences in order to explain to themselves and to other Christian critics their apparent lack of success.[135] Yet, even such open-air preachers are concerned to gather a crowd and negotiate a hearing looking for various opportunities in which to do including welcoming and dealing with 'hecklers'.[136]

Here the point is not whether one agrees with the message or even with the method or the extent to which some open-air preachers are more successful than others in attracting a crowd and negotiating a hearing. Rather, the point is that as with other radical street performers open-air preachers have to perform in the streets collapsing distinctions between performer and audience, art and activism, as they seek to create an audience and negotiate a hearing in the direction of change.

Conclusion

Open-air preaching is a historically established form of preaching. In the current context its value is critiqued on theological grounds as well as in relation to its 'awkwardness', and 'ineffectiveness'.[137] Open-air preachers, however, are not the only ideologically committed groups who take to the

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[130] Ibid., pp. 82-95.
[131] Soper, *Advocacy*, 65.
[132] Ibid., p. 77.
[133] Ibid., pp. 77-78.
[134] Edelman, 'Intolerable', p. 122.
[135] Ibid., pp. 122-124.
[136] See this example from Ray Comfort, one of the preachers Edelman critiques, it includes guidance on how to attract a crowd, http://www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/methods/openairpreaching.html, accessed 1/8/2015.
[137] Edelman, 'Intolerable', pp. 120-121.

streets seeking the transformation of the *status quo*. When viewed alongside these other radical street performances the practice shares the same challenges, limitations, and opportunities. Fletcher in his work on evangelical outreach argues that left wing activist performers can learn from the commitment of evangelicals as they seek to win others, even those groups he does not agree with.[138] I would argue that insofar as open-air preaching is a radical street performance, open-air preachers can learn much from radical street performers concerning what it means to enact ideologically committed performances in the streets, not least in creating audiences and negotiating a hearing in the public square. This is something that may become more rather than less important if the Christian church finds other opportunities for public discourse limited.

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Dr. Stuart Blythe,
Rector of IBTS Centre in Amsterdam

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[138] Fletcher, *Preaching*, pp. 15-45.

Narrative, Theological Anthropology, and the Praxis of Mission

Øyvind Hadland

Abstract: Through the years as a missionary among the Lahus of Southeast Asia the author became dissatisfied with the evangelical praxes of mission he participated in. He also came to the conclusion that for real changes to take place, one has to revise the theological perspectives on soteriology and anthropology underpinning such praxes. The article works out a relational anthropology, building on Stanley J. Grenz, and especially the narrative implication for theological anthropology and praxes of mission. This relational anthroplogy is then contextualised in an example of possible narrative praxes of mission in Lahu villages.

Keywords: Theology of mission, evangelism, linguistic philosophy, South-East Asia, Stanley J. Grenz

The atmosphere is full of excitement. Evangelists from the Lahu Baptist Conventions in Myanmar and Thailand are crying, laughing, and dancing as they experience a fresh encounter with God in a small border village. Many villagers have come to see what is going on. The gospel is preached. The call for salvation is given. No one responds. Not a single hand is lifted.

After such experiences I asked myself how the gospel should be contextualised in order to make sense to Lahus.[1] As I pondered about this, I came to realise that there is a strong connection between praxes of mission, soteriology, and theological anthropology. Instead of focusing solely on contextualisation, a revision of the anthropology that underpins the praxes was needed.

This article explores narrative and ecclesial aspects of a relational anthropology in order to propose new praxes of mission built on such anthropology. It will use the philosophical and theological arguments for a relational anthropology laid out in *The Social God and the Relational Self*[2] by Stanley J. Grenz as a point of departure.

As the short anecdote exemplifies: new perspectives about humans and salvation from a relational rather than individualistic and reductionist

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[1] A people group of Southeast Asia. For more about the Lahus, see below.
[2] Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

paradigms, are needed to inform theologies and praxes of mission. This article seeks to meet this need.

1. Narrative Implications on Theological Anthropology

1.1 Background

In *Transforming Mission,* David J. Bosch writes that 'the scope of salvation – however we define salvation – determines the scope of the missionary enterprise'.[3] In *Constants in Context,* Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder go a step further and connect soteriology and anthropology. They write that 'the understanding of the nature of humanity is foundational to the notion of salvation'.[4]

Evangelical missiological thinking such as homogeneous unity principle, people-group focus, success as numerical growth, and propositional theology leading to slogans such as 'getting the message out' and 'preach the truth' grow out of the soteriology and anthropology of evangelicals.

We[5] often had evening outreaches in Lahu villages. It was supposed that sermons enabled people to make a qualified decision to accept Christ as their personal saviour. Several audio-visual methods were also used. The evangelists were trained in Bible storytelling and provided with 40 key stories from the Bible on CDs. The underlying assumption was not the transformative power of the stories in and of themselves, but that the stories contain key propositions people need to learn to be saved. The story about Abraham and Isaac was thus included because the proposition that blood cleanses from sin (God provided a ram for them) while a story about how Joseph forgives his brothers and is reunited with his father, emphasising relationality, is not included.

This theology is also found in the *Lausanne Covenant*. The covenant says; 'evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God'.[6] There is no room for relational aspects of salvation as Lausanne sees it: 'reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God'.[7] Conversion in this regard is, according to Bevans and Schroeder, reduced to a mental decision and is radically individualistic

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[3] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991), p. 393.
[4] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2004), p. 45.
[5] 'We' here refers to the Evangelisation Department of the Thailand Lahu Baptist Convention.
[6] Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization I, 'The Lausanne Covenant', in James D. Douglas (ed.), *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* (Minneapolis, Minn.: World Wide Publications, 1975), p. 4.
[7] Ibid.

while salvation is a purely spiritual matter.[8] Paul S. Fiddes tersely comments that evangelical soteriology has often seen the born-again 'soul as a built-in survival capsule'.[9]

In other words, evangelical theology and praxes of mission build on a dualistic anthropology and thus also a dualistic soteriology. It is these notions with which this article, with the help of Grenz, contends.

1.2 The Narrative Self

Grenz starts his work on theological anthropology by proposing that 'the boundaries of our individuality are socially constituted within a semantic rather than a physical space, itself a social and intellectual product'.[10] This observation converges with the philosopher Kenneth Gergen's view, who, in *Relational Being,* states that 'the very idea of individual persons is a by-product of relational process'.[11] What Grenz and Gergen agree about is that relationality comes before, not after, individuality.

Four relational aspects of philosophical anthropology will be discussed here, namely (1) the relational basis of cognition; (2) the self as an act in community; (3) the demise of the isolated self; and (4) the multiplicity of selves.

1.2.1 Knowing How to Go On

Grenz points to Augustine's claim that truth dwells inside humans and that the inward turn marked the soul's pathway to God as important for modern individuality.[12] At the dawn of modernity, Descartes separated humans from the physical world when he penned, 'I shall consider myself as not having hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood or senses'.[13] Personhood for Descartes did not only include the mind or the soul, but it was the mind. Grenz wonders just how a person could know anything at all about the outside world if Descartes was right.[14]

A very different approach is the relational epistemology summarised by Ludwig Wittgenstein's advice not 'to think of understanding as a "mental process" at all – for that is what confuses you. But ask yourself: In what sort of cases … do we say, "Now I know how to go on"'.[15] This is a move from

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[8] Bevans and Schroeder, p. 45.
[9] Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p. 194.
[10] Grenz, p. 2.
[11] Kenneth J. Gergen, *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. xxvi.
[12] Grenz, p. 61.
[13] Cited in Fergus Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1997), p. 4.
[14] Grenz, p. 70.
[15] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), § 154.

'I think' to 'we do', or moving epistemology from interior mental activities to relational acts in community. Gergen clarifies: It is 'when you take some action in reply to mine that my words commence their journey toward meaning'.[16] Knowledge is to know how to navigate in a community by using words and actions learnt through narratives.

For praxes of mission this has implications as long as narratives are 'constitutive of the way humans actually experience their world and themselves'.[17] That is to say, there is no other way to build an understanding of what is meant by 'God', 'sin', or 'salvation' besides relentless retelling and embodying narratives until people know how to go on. The gospel is not a set of propositions that one must learn and adhere to, but the possibility to learn how to embody the narratives found in Scripture and Christian traditions. Such gospel-knowledge is always partial and never complete. To search for the pure and simple gospel is a misleading endeavour. The meaning of the gospel is only available because of enacted narratives in the life of Christians.

1.2.2 Self as a Verb

The anthropology of Enlightenment and modernity, also picked up by evangelicalism, envisions an 'I' which is 'entirely distinct from body'.[18] This means that the self is separated and alien to others.[19] Grenz calls this view of the self 'possessive individualism'.[20]

According to Grenz, predecessors to evangelicalism, such as the Puritans, Pietists, and the Great Revivals, gradually came to view the soul as more inward and self-centred.[21] This again led to a soteriology focusing squarely on saving the self or soul.[22]

A relational epistemology leads to a different anthropology. When cognition is a set of linguistically, communally learnt ways of knowing what to do next and how to reply to others' actions, then identity cannot be referred to by a noun 'self' – but turns into a verb – 'to self'.[23] Through interaction one learns how to self. Put differently, what comprises the identity, or the self, is not that the mind is inflated into the 'tube' of the body[24]; rather

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[16] Gergen, p. 33.
[17] Grenz, p. 328.
[18] Tim Labron, *Wittgenstein and Theology* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 28.
[19] Kenneth J. Gergen, 'Social Construction and Practical Theology: The Dance Begins', in Chris A. M. Hermans, et al. (eds.), *Social Constructionism and Theology* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002), p. 15.
[20] Grenz, p. 11. Grenz takes this term from Martin Buber.
[21] Ibid., p. 80.
[22] Ibid., p. 85.
[23] Ibid., p. 13.
[24] Metaphor used by Wittgenstein in *Culture and Value*, ed. by G. H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman, trans. by Peter Winch (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 11.

identity is the complex sets of even conflicting behaviours learnt through interaction.

To self is thus linked to the ability of someone to 'select certain events from one's past … as a basis for interpreting … the whole of one's life' and the 'capacity to tell a story about' this person.[25] For 'I' to have meaning, the story told must evoke expected replies from others. If no one replies in a specific way to a self' that self is meaningless, non-existent. The 'socially constructed post-modern self is a narrative self',[26] Grenz summarises.

Identity as relational learnt patterns of behaviour questions praxes of mission that focus on securing the soul for eternity. Is it an object or a way of life that is in need of salvation? Could it be that to become Christian is to learn to self in a different way, which is living in a different manner? Likewise, can evangelisation comprise proclaiming propositions if learning to self in a new way is based on hearing new narratives, re-interpreting one's experiences by way of these narratives, and then starting to narrate about 'me' from these Christian narratives?

1.2.3 Selves in Relationships

The modern view of society, in Grenz's analysis of it, consists of 'a collection of autonomous, independent selves'.[27] Society thus defined is likened to a bucket of stones: the stones touch but do not coalesce. One consequence of modern anthropology's focus on human separation and self-realisation is that one 'becomes suspicious of others and constrains they may place on our lives'.[28]

Grenz, on the other hand, conceives personal identity as something that cannot be a private matter. Identity is moulded through the narratives of one's community and is a narrative shared by many.[29] There is, thus, no 'I' separated from the form of life from which one learns to self. So, Na Ui_[30] does not have an identity that she shows forth to others, rather Na Ui_ is formed as she learns how to use the appropriate sets of behaviours in particular circumstances through narrative participation in a community.

Therefore, in missiological terms, the self, or soul is not something that is to be rescued out of the body. The Christian-self does not reside in the body, but sprouts from participation in the narration of Scripture, tradition, and community. To self in a Christlike manner is narratively incarnated as

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[25] Grenz, pp. 328-329. Gergen, 'Social Construction and Practical Theology', p. 16.
[26] Grenz, p. 135.
[27] Ibid., p. 99.
[28] Gergen, *Relational Being*, p. 51.
[29] Grenz, pp. 330-331.
[30] Na Ui_ is a common Lahu female name.

patterns of expected behaviours and acts. Evangelisation is not securing 'what is' for eternity, but involving people in a conversation with an eye on what they can become through new ways of 'selfing'. Salvation must, in other words, be linked to lifestyle and ethics.

1.2.4. Multiple Selves

It should come as no surprise at this point that for Grenz to self is 'an ongoing process'.[31] Gergen concurs: 'the process remains forever incomplete … self-identity remains in motion'.[32] People are embedded in several narrative communities at the same time and there is not just one self but fragments of many selves within each body.

To take part in multiple narrative communities gives 'rise to an enormous reservoir of inchoate potentials for action', Gergen writes.[33] So there might be a 'Christian-Na Ui_', 'working-in-the-field-Na Ui_', 'out-with-friends-Na Ui_', 'wife-Na Ui_', and so on, most of them intersecting to a greater or lesser degree. Humans are not *in*dividuals[34] but *multi*dividuals, always being several different selves simultaneously and over time. As multi-beings, humans never live out any of the selves in a coherent and complete way, but always partially and incompletely.

This process is radically different from the metaphor of mask,[35] where one puts on a mask to play a certain role and then takes it off later to be one's real self. Multi-being is more like a player participating in several games simultaneously. It is when one has to play both 'wife' and 'friend' at the same time that one might run into trouble determining which way to self.

Such battles between different ways to self are not necessarily 'struggles between good and evil' but rather 'between competing goods'[36] as one knows several ways to perform 'good' learnt from the different communities one belongs to. What might be labelled 'good', or permissible, in one game might be 'evil', or a foul, in another one. One does, consequently, have several opposing options for replying to others' actions which might be both good and evil at the same time.[37]

In evangelism, then, one has to be aware that one cannot expect a person to trade one 'self' with another. Even though a person learns to self in a Christ-like manner, she or he will not forget other ways to self. Christian-selfing will be weak and fragmented at first, and then mature as subtleties of

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[31] Grenz, p. 310.
[32] Gergen, *Relational Being*, p. 44.
[33] Ibid., p. 133.
[34] Meaning, of course, 'not-dividable'.
[35] Gergen, *Relational Being*, p. 138.
[36] Kenneth J. Gergen, 'Relativism, Religion, and Relational Being', *Common Knowledge,* 13:2-3 (2007), p. 370.
[37] Gergen, *Relational Being*, p. 140.

Christian language games are acquired through interaction with more 'skilled' Christians.

One reason multi-being is important to Gergen is that he fears that the 'alienation, competition, and disparagement' associated with individualism might return with intensified power through a community.[38] The 'I' that is separate from 'you' is thus merely exchanged with 'us' against 'them'. Gergen calls this 'bonded relationship'.[39] Grenz does not pick up this possible trap of relationality.

It is by affirming that no self or community is complete or done narrating its story that one remains humble and open to others. This is an important lesson to bring into praxes of mission, especially when working among people with a different religious way of selfing than oneself.

It is quite normal to be bilingual, or multilingual, so maybe it should not be that uncommon to be bi-religious or multi-religious? To be bilingual does not mean that one mixes two languages, but that one is competent in both. Being bi-religious or multi-religious is not so much about mixing two religions as being competent in two sets of expected behaviour. The question is whether one is able to play these games without running into too deeply conflicting ways of perceiving good and bad. At least as long as religion is primarily seen as ways of living, that is, as a cultural artefact and not metaphysics,[40] it should be possible to discuss theologies of religion in a non-bonded way.

1.3 The Ecclesial Self

The relational self Grenz aims at is 'not merely … person-in-relationship but … the ecclesial self, the new humanity in communion with the triune God'.[41] To achieve this, Grenz moves theological anthropology from recovering something distorted in the past to orbiting future potentials that might be partially lived out in the present.

1.3.1 Imago Dei *as Past Condition*

The divine image has, for the most part, been seen as something inherent in the human configuration; something which could not be lost without ceasing to be human.[42] The most common view has been that that this something is rationality.[43]

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[38] Ibid., p. 190.
[39] Ibid., p. 184.
[40] For religion as cultural praxes see James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Witness: Systematic Theology, Volume 3* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2000), pp. 287-288.
[41] Grenz, p. 312.
[42] Ibid., p. 142.
[43] See ibid, pp. 117, 143, 153-161.

In the nineteenth century many theologians started to emphasise that what God bestowed upon humans was the ability to connect to him by endowing humans with a spirit.[44] In a way, the earlier view was embedded in this revised one. Charles Hodges summarises this well by arguing that 'God is a Spirit, the human soul is a spirit. The essential attributes of a spirit are reason, conscience, and will'.[45]

It is this view that has been handed over to evangelicals, that all humans have an immortal soul or spirit.[46] It espouses that the *imago* in Adam was 'perfect, complete, and mature'[47] but through the fall the image lost its spiritual connection with God and its rationality, morality, and volition were severely distorted. People thus need to be restored to the primordial state in order to be saved.

Fiddes bemoans that this anthropology often sees justification and sanctification as two different processes.[48] Can this stem from a flawed anthropology which emphasis salvation of the immortal soul and sees behavioural changes as secondary?

1.3.2 Imago Dei *as Future Potentiality*

Grenz's theological anthropology follows in the footsteps of Irenaeus. Irenaeus argued that when God created humanity they were not complete in the sense that they were not yet all that God meant them to be.[49] The *Imago Dei* was in a sense embryonically present in them, meaning 'in the form of God's intention … and … potential for what [they] could become. In short, the divine image was eschatological or *telic'*.[50]

The divine image is like a destination written on a ticket. Humans are to arrive at *divine image* through a journey. If humans are approaching this destination, they are acquiring more and more of the image simultaneously.[51] Actually arriving at the destination of *divine image* is therefore 'ultimately an eschatological event'.[52]

Grenz builds his revised theological anthropology on the notion of received personhood within the Trinity,[53] often called Social

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[44] Ibid., p. 171.

[45] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 volumes (New York: Charles Scribner, 1872-1873), 2:96-97.

[46] Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 167.

[47] Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, p. 177.

[48] Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2003), p. 235.

[49] Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, p. 147.

[50] Ibid., p. 177.

[51] Ibid., p. 147.

[52] Ibid., p. 323.

[53] In my Master's thesis, which this article builds on, I include discussions relating to the Trinity. First, Fiddes's warning against direct correlation between divine and human personhood; second, Flett's work on overcoming the cleavage between nature and act in both God and the church. See Øyvind Hadland,

Trinitarianism.[54] The salvific journey God intends for humanity is not 'directed toward individuals', instead 'it entails the creation of a new community'.[55] Contra the main premise of evangelical theology referred to earlier, becoming a Christian is primarily about participation in a fellowship by learning new ways of living. This implies that Christian identity is received from the community in a manner similar to the received personhood of the divine personae. Grenz, consequently, argues that 'conversion to God is inseparable from a turning to others'.[56]

To describe and encapsulate this communal identity Grenz introduces the term 'ecclesial self'. The ecclesial self is participating in the new humanity in communion with the Trinitarian persons through the corporate personality of Christ who is the one who incorporates 'the many' within himself.[57] The full realisation of the ecclesial self is, as stated previously, a future reality.

Grenz therefore concludes that the ecclesial self subverts Augustine's anthropology and soteriology that identity and salvation issue from a turn inward.[58] The implication for evangelicals is that the focus on saving souls is not only off the mark, it does not even aim in the right direction.

1.3.3 Proleptic Participation in the Imago Dei

Grenz shifts the locus of theological anthropology from the past to the future, from individuality to correlation, and from substance to action. However, what does his view entail for those who are still on the journey towards iImago Dei? Grenz maintains that the shared ecclesial self is 'proleptically present in the here and now'.[59] This is made possible as God endows the Spirit to those who turn around and start walking with Christ toward Imago Dei.[60]

The Spirit includes new people in the ecclesial self through those who already participate in it, so that the latter replicate the imago to the former.[61] Through embodied storytelling the Spirit employs those who already proleptically share in the divine image as witnesses. By inhabiting biblical narratives the ecclesial self is therefore also a narrative self.

'Narrative Ecclesial Selves: The Anthropology of Stanley J. Grenz in Theologies and Praxes of Mission', unpublished MTh in Contextual Missiology thesis, University of Wales via IBTS – Prague, 2014.

[54] Grenz, p. 49.

[55] Ibid., p. 249.

[56] Grenz, *Community of God*, p. 410. Fiddes likewise states that 'Christian conversion is always the discovery of others in God'. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, pp. 229-230.

[57] Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, pp. 305, 332.

[58] Ibid., p. 332.

[59] Ibid., p. 334.

[60] Ibid., p. 328.

[61] Ibid., p. 225.

Grenz argues that by being a destination the ecclesial self implies 'an ethical imperative for the life in the believing community' in the present.[62] Added to this is the previously discussed relationality of cognition, that the use of a word is its meaning, which makes the ethical dimension of the ecclesial self, as a way to a Christ-like self, paramount. This means that spirituality and ethics coalesce.

If one moves closer to the *Imago Dei* by living according to ecclesial and Christo-centric ways to self, then Christian identity is actions rather than inner substance. Indeed, in this proleptic age the ecclesial self is these embodied actions. There is no dichotomy between spirituality and the material world, in other words. The spiritual is not something within believers, hidden and disclosed to the world, but rather tangible, ethical expressions of eschatological anticipations. The ecclesial self cannot foster dualism.

To summarise: First, the *imago* not as a substance implanted into the fabric of humanity but a potential laid in front of it. Second, the salvific destination is the creation of a new humanity. One receives personhood, the *Imago Dei* or the ecclesial self, when one enters into communion with God and to everything that God communes with. Third, humans are not incorporated into Christ's 'substance' but into his way of living and acting. Living out the ecclesial self in manners similar to those narrated about Jesus in the Gospels is salvation. Four, in this proleptic age Grenz's philosophical and theological anthropologies merge.

1.4 Narrative Implications in the Present

Even though Grenz emphasises the proleptic nature of the present state of believers he does not extensively work out what limitations the narrative self has on the ecclesial self. There are at least four ways that the narrative reality of the present age influences how to self in a Christ-like manner.

First, people are many selves or multi-beings at the same time. One participates in many forms of life simultaneously; the selves that emerge from each form of life are all partial and fragmented. When one learns an ecclesial form of life, the ecclesial self that takes form is just one of many selves residing within the same body.

Second, the ecclesial self does not depict one single, universal way to self because local churches are embedded within divergent forms of life, such as cultural, linguistic and denominational, simultaneously. There will not be just one ecclesial self but many. That is, what one can see through Christians today are contextualised ecclesial selves, but ecclesial nevertheless.

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[62] Ibid., p. 224.

Third, because of this contextuality ethical implications of the ecclesial selves will vary within different Christian communities. At the same time, as believers are narrative multi-beings they can only act partially according to the divine image displayed in Christ. Accordingly, one has to be humble when addressing morality and proper conduct, both when settling what comprises right conduct and when judging how others act out the divine image.

Fourth, following Paul's reflection that 'now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully' (1 Corinthians 13:12, NIV) our understanding and formulation of doctrines and theologies will be partial. All present knowledge is socially constructed through narratives. Yes, God participates in this social construction through narratives of the Bible, church traditions, and the ministry of the Spirit within and outside the Christian community, but on this side of the eschatological consummation ontological truth of 'what really is' is not available.

In addition, two issues related to our physical bodies are wanting in Grenz's anthropology:

(1) The question of what part our existence as biological creatures has for personality and identity has not been addressed. This is a major flaw in both Grenz's and Gergen's proposals. What might be said is that if one is biologically disposed to some kind of personal traits, these traits are still interpreted through communally derived cognition and expressed by actions learnt within communities.

(2) The question of what will be saved, or maintained, of a particular human being into eternity is yet to be answered. If humans do not have an immortal soul, then what is preserved? Fiddes's opinion will be sufficient here; he states that bodily resurrection means a 're-creation of everything that makes us human, as something at least equivalent to being embodied' though not with same physical structure as in this world.[63] The New Testament also teaches that 'what we will be has not yet been made known' (1 John 3:2, NIV).

2. Narrative Implications for Praxes of Mission

Before discussing some possible praxes of mission taking the narrative implication on ecclesial selves into account, a short introduction about the Lahus is in order.

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[63] Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2000), p. 245.

2.1 The Lahus

The Lahus reside in Yunnan, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam and comprise at least 700,000 people.[64] They are known as 'extraordinarily egalitarian', even when it comes to gender roles.[65] From the second half of the nineteenth century several messianic movements, spawn by the indigenisation of Buddhism, revived the worship of the creator god *G'ui˰ Sha*.[66]

In the midst of these revivals, the Baptist missionary William M. Young experienced large numbers of Lahus coming to Christianity from 1904 and onward.[67] Later missionaries have accused this early movement of baptising too many too soon, with negative outcomes for the later church.[68] Today there are numerous Lahu Christians in China, Myanmar and Thailand.[69]

My family worked together with the Thailand Lahu Baptist Convention, which consists of about 8400 baptised members and another 7300 affiliated in 78 churches and 12 preaching points.[70] The Evangelisation Department's main ministry was to support evangelists living in villages without believers. The Evangelisation Department tried to help the evangelists by visits to the villages, training seminars, outreaches, and help with issues like citizenship and water projects. Lahus took the initiative for all ministries. My role was, therefore, one of advisor and mentor, both to the leaders of the Evangelisation Department and the evangelists.

2.2 Narrative Praxes of Mission

I intend to approach this last part in a circular manner. I will put forward one soteriological aspect of ecclesial selves and then try to contextualise narrative praxes of mission in a Lahu setting. When this is done, I will address a new aspect. In this way I will move as Bosch advocates from 'scope of salvation' to concrete 'missionary enterprise[s]'.[71]

This discussion is in no way extensive and does not intend to be a full blown description of narrative, ecclesial praxes of mission. What will be discussed are notions brought up in the previous discussion, especially the

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[64] James A. Matisoff, *English-Lahu Lexicon* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of Los Angelses Press, 2006), pp. xi-xii.

[65] Anthony R. Walker, *Merit and the Millennium: Routine and Crisis in the Ritual Lives of the Lahu People* (New Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 2003), p. 106.

[66] Walker, p. 161.

[67] Ibid., pp. 577-581, 627-628.

[68] Ibid., p. 665.

[69] No records are available, so any number will only be a guess.

[70] Information provided by Norachai Jatae (Head of TLBC's Evangelisation Department), *TLBC Statistics*, [e-mail] (Personal communication, 7 July 2014).

[71] See footnote 3.

ones that relates to the present state of narrative paradigm as elaborated in the treatment of philosophical anthropology.

Furthermore, the suggestions for praxes of mission are not direct suggestions to the Lahu Baptists. My suggestions are rather to be considered as thought experiments, praxes that might have merit and that could be used as springboards for actual missional work. After living abroad for twelve years I feel more comfortable experimenting with potential ways to contextualise among Lahus than in my native Norway.

2.2.1 Evangelising 'How to Go On'

As discussed earlier, when evangelising among Lahus we[72] aimed at getting some propositional truths across. This should end with people converting to a new set of beliefs. Though utilising audio and/or visual tools, the focus was still on propositional knowledge.

If knowledge is a about 'know[ing] how to go on', then when sharing the gospel, in sermons, conversations or storytelling, something about how to act and live as a Christian has to be included. This means that the value of evangelistic rallies, such as the evening gatherings we did in Lahu villages, is limited. There is little or no knowledge about how to go on transferred during such events, and consequently no salvation to receive. There must be a move from transferral of propositions to nurturing of behaviours. Here are two ways to do this.

First, what is needed are Christians who monitor and live such knowledge on a daily basis. That means that the most important praxis of mission to Lahu villages without a Christian fellowship is for evangelists to settle there for longer periods of time as embodied gospels. This has been the norm and has borne fruit. Nevertheless, the emphasis of the task given to the evangelist needs to shift from 'what to preach' to be more concerned about 'how to live'. The evangelist is not so much to preach (propositionally correct) truth as to make the gospel tangible by truthful living. So instead of talking about 'forgiveness' in abstract and distant examples such as a court room, the evangelist needs to act out how to forgive and how to ask for forgiveness in real life situations.

Jesus said that 'everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock' (Matthew 7:24, NIV). If evangelists do not put 'these words' into practice in front of the villagers' eyes, people in the village will never be able to build their houses on 'rock'. With 'these words' Jesus meant the parables and admonitions about how to give oneself in the Sermon on the Mount. The

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[72] As earlier, 'we' is the Thailand Lahu Baptist Convention's Evangelisation Department.

'rock', therefore, is salvific knowledge about how to go on as a follower of Christ. It is when what one hears makes its way into action, namely ethical living, that salvation takes place. It is when someone lives these actions that evangelism is accomplished.

If there is to be any outreach in a village the evangelising team should approach the villagers in the same manner, whether to help with work in the fields, cooking food, or joining in night time talk around the fireplace. Therefore, during the time as visitors in the village these Christians might share knowledge of how to act and react to what is happening.

Second, one could develop ways to embody how to go on in dances or dramas. A traditional Lahu dance depicts the different stages of rice cultivation from clearing a new field to the harvest. In a Christian dance one could draw parallels between episodes in the life of Jesus and how to live as his follower. As an example, depicting how Jesus fed the 5000 could be connected with helping others in need, or relate how Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery with how to forgive others, and so on.

One could also work with embodied storytelling, where people act out the stories they are learning. Thus they not only hear about forgiving, but act out how to forgive and how to ask for forgiveness. In this way villagers will internalise movements, wordings and express the emotions associated with forgiving, both as the offended and the offender. If a group of people act out when Joseph's brothers came to ask him for forgiveness that is more instructive than only hearing it. This could be done during or in continuation of Sunday services or as part of village outreaches that includes both villagers and visiting Christians as actors.

Some might object that this implies that people are saved by their actions. In a way that is true, but not that one does such actions in order to obtain salvation, but by doing concrete actions one is moving in a salvific direction. The distinction between justification and sanctification that Fiddes bemoans thus disappears. Salvation is not to receive a state of forgiveness as much as to forgive or be forgiven, and through that to be reconciled with fellow humans. It is only by seeing how 'forgiving' is used between people that one can understand what it means that God forgives.

Evangelisation has, therefore, to move from oral proclamation of some universal truths to instruction and depiction of how to live as a Christian. This includes, among other things, Christians living as embodied gospels, hearing stories about how to go on, and practicing it through dances or dramas.

2.2.2 Christian as a Verb

When a people start to know how to go on in a Christ-like manner, the question arises: When are people Christians? When we visited villages and someone responded and prayed for salvation, we reckoned these as Christians. From a narrative and ecclesial perspective this praxis is unwarranted as human identity is not bound to an immortal soul but to competence of how to act meaningfully within a form of life. Christian identity is ethical in nature; it is about the transformation of how to self, or how 'to Christian'. Christians are what they do similarly to the way 'God is who he is in his acts'.[73] Of course, the acts of Christians do not correspond to the eschatological goal revealed in the life of Christ, they are fragmented and partial.

So there are two question to be addressed: (1) how new competence changes one's identity and (2) what that competence consists of.

Through learning several new ways to go on in a Christ-like manner, one gains competence not only in isolated language games but in a complex form of life. As an example, instead of *neˆ pi phuh̲ da̦ ve* (to release harmful spirits against someone, namely sorcery)[74] Na Ui̲ has learnt a different way of how to go on when someone has insulted or harmed her. Then, one can link Na Ui̲'s new act to biblical stories learnt, as Joseph and his brothers, or Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. One can ask her, 'How does the story about Joseph forgiving his brothers go?' One can also help Na Ui̲ to tell how she used to react and how she does now. A good place for such conversation is around the fireplace with a cup of tea.

Through such narration, there is a process of gradual 're-storying' Na Ui̲ identity as new narratives about Na Ui̲ are told by herself, by other Christians, and by the villagers. As a consequence, she gains a new self through this new Christ-like way to self. Na Ui̲ will 'select certain events from [her] past … as a basis for interpreting' how she used to act and when changes started to happen (i.e. conversion), and then both she and others will gain the 'capacity to tell a [new] story about' her. It is as part of this process of re-telling one's identity that baptism fits in as a powerful, embodied drama.

Through such re-storying one gets believers who understand their present Christian identity as a way of living instead of personal enjoyment

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[73] John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), p. 2.
[74] Walker, pp. 290-294.

of spiritual benefits and goods, which is John G. Flett's critique of evangelical soteriology.[75] What does this way of living comprise then?

Fiddes argues that a Christian fellowship, and therefore also every person participating in it, is to 'engage in movements for the liberation of the oppressed, refusing to tolerate any dehumanising methods of authorities in this present world, and contradicting them with the contradiction of the Spirit of God.'[76] Na Ui_ is not saved to enjoy spiritual goods but to participate in the mission of God, which is acting for the liberation from any dehumanising alienation and creation of fellowship resembling the ecclesial self, which is Christ.

Earlier the language game of forgiving has been used as an example, and Na Ui_ could look for occasions to bring reconciliation between villagers, believers or others. Throughout history Lahu villages have stayed small due to factionalism to such an extent that it has caught anthropologists' attention.[77] Therefore, to bring in a new way of responding to such factionalism would surely be a missional way to Christian. Na Ui_'s identity as Christian should thus be linked to the way she participates in creating fellowship and community.

Many villages are far from cities, so even though treatment at governmental hospitals is more or less free, it is difficult to get there and to pay for expenses like food and accommodation for family members. A way for Na Ui_ 'to self' in a Christ-like way is to join with others to pay petrol, accommodation fees, medicine, and other expenses, when other villagers are hospitalised. She could also bring sick people to the city if she owns a motorbike.

Other examples could be given, such as helping those addicted to opium, stopping girls from ending up as prostitutes in the cities, giving financial support to those applying for Thai citizenship, praying for people who are sick or afflicted by malicious spirits, teaching about sustainable farming, and the list could go on.

Narrative praxes of mission lead people to identify with the community of God through communal re-storying a person's narrative. There is no individual decision to make. To rephrase Grenz: 'the boundaries

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[75] Flett, p. 179.

[76] Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1989), p. 32.

[77] 'Scholars … point out a tendency of the Lahu to split … due to [intra-village] factionalism. The Lahu themselves and their legends also speak of the splitting tendency and the lack of cooperation and organization as one of the negative characters of the people', Yoichi Nishimoto, *Lahu Narratives of Inferiority: Christianity and Minority in Ethnic Power Relations* (Chiang Rai, Thailand: Center for Inter-Ethnic Studies, 2000), p. 38.

of [Christian identity] are socially constituted within a semantic rather than a [meta-] physical space'.[78] Christian identity is a communal achievement.

This re-storying grows out of embodying biblical narratives in missional engagement for others. Salvation will not be an end but a journey. When 'God commits God's own self to body – or rather, to bodies - as a meeting place'[79] between himself and humans, then that person lives salvifically. That is, when God lives through one's body one is moving toward the eschatological goal of *Imago Dei*.

2.2.3 Salvation as Community

Conversion is about movement from something to someone. This paper has argued against the Lausanne I statement that one comes to God personally and that reconciliation with humanity is not reconciliation with God. Rather, participation in the ecclesial self, which is 'the self constructed *extra se in Christo* by the Holy Spirit', implies that 'the personal identity of all who are "in Christ" is bound up with participation in a particular community'.[80] It is when one reconciles with God's goal, a shared human identity in Christ, that one is reconciled with God himself. There can be no distinction between so-called horizontal and vertical reconciliation.[81] A good biblical example of this is how Joseph could only reunite with his father by and through his reconciliation with his brothers.

A good narrative praxis of the communality of salvation is regular celebration of the Eucharist for numerous reasons:

Theological: When the bread is broken and shared among the villagers it communicates that personhood is derived from Christ. The Eucharist points to Christ as the author of their new way of selfing, that the new way to live is learnt though Jesus-narratives and embodiment of these narratives by evangelists and other Christians. Furthermore, as the communion bread is handed out it also points to the shared identity of the ecclesial self. The bread was complete before it was broken, but now, after everyone has received bread, the bread is only 'complete' if they join together. In this way new Christians are reminded that they belong to each other.

Narrative: As humans are narrative selves, the Eucharist as an embodied drama is a powerful way to tell about Christ, about communal unity, and the eschatological dream that one day the now broken bread will be reunited again. Especially as Lahus are oral learners, the Eucharist has great merit as it includes both storytelling and enactment of what happened

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[78] See footnote 10.
[79] Fiddes, *Participating in God*, p. 279.
[80] Grenz, *Social God and Relational Self*, p. 332.
[81] In the vertical I would include all of creation.

then, the visualisation of the unity of what is happening now, and is a metaphor of what is going to happen.

Missional: In addition to this, the Eucharist point to God's self-humiliating engagement in the world and thus also to the missional nature of the Christian community. The unity of the Eucharist is the unity in reaching out in acts of liberation and in establishing community. In my opinion there is no better way to epitomise God's engagement in the world than the Eucharist.

As mentioned earlier, the Lahus have a history of factionalism. Where Western cultures have espoused society as an aggregation of independent selves the Lahus have espoused it as a collection of 'highly autonomous households'.[82] The praxis of Eucharist on a regular basis, preferably weekly, would serve as a constant opportunity for reconciliation between households and a witness about intra-household unity that could prevent villages from constantly changing inhabitants.

2.2.4 Humble Multiplicity

The majority of evangelical theologies and praxes of mission have been exclusive towards other religious traditions. Throughout this article it has been advocated that Christian selfing is fragmented and partial. It has also been advocated that one cannot trade one way of selfing with another, or just leave one of them behind from one moment to another. Each person embodies several ways to self, as humans are multi-beings. Therefore, Christians must be humble about their own correctness and superiority.

In meeting other religious traditions, a narrative missionality views religions primarily, at least in the present, as ways to self, that is, as ways of living. Therefore aggressive and militant language[83] which nurtures an idea that 'we' as the church are in a conflict or battle with 'you' is indefensible. Due to God's self-humiliating nature church fellowships cannot be bonded relations. A praxis that should be nurtured then, is in anticipation to look for 'occasions for Christ to embody himself' in Lahu culture by asking if aspects of village life are 'at times … sacramental'.[84]

Here the ritual of *iˉ kaˆ liˇ yuˇ daˆ ve* (water exchange custom) is illustrative.[85] In this custom each household gathers some water and pours it into empty bamboo tubes so that each tube contains water from every family. This water is then used for reciprocal handwashing by the women before it is poured out at sacred sites in the village. Through this rite both unity and

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[82] Walker, p. 15. Later, on pages 639-640, Walker remarks that '[v]illage factionalism seems no less marked among Christian Lahu than among traditionalist, with the same strong potential for causing village fission.'
[83] Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, pp. 272-273.
[84] Ibid., p. 191.
[85] Walker, pp. 402-403.

cleansing is expressed. Maybe this could be incorporated into the Eucharist celebration?

Another aspect is the egalitarianism among the Lahus, especially that men and women share the same work load and responsibilities. This includes religious leadership, village leadership, farming, child-rearing, cooking, etc., the rationale for this equality is found in the creation myths about the two first humans made as an ideal dyad.[86] Many parts of the world endorse paternalism with dire consequences for girls and women. The egalitarian unity of Lahu marriages, accordingly, has something 'sacramental' about it worthwhile for Lahu Christians to nurture and then share with others as an embodiment of the ecclesial self.

Finally, one should be prepared for and not be paranoiac about it, as Fiddes argues, that sometimes evangelisation leads to renewal and recommitment to current religious practices.[87] For others evangelism might lead to bi-religiosity which means that these people are competent in two ways to self. If and in what ways this may be seen as an enrichment or a problem must be worked out at the local level.

Narrative praxes of mission must be humble and should always start by asking: Is this an embodiment of Christ? Only after this is done can the Christian community have credibility as a prophetic voice in the village.

3. Conclusion

This article tries to move theologies and praxes of mission in a new direction by way of reformulating what salvation is by constructing a relational anthropology building on both theological and philosophical aspects.

There are several limits to this article. It has not been possible to do a thorough evaluation of each nuance of the narrative nature of humans or the communal nature of God's *telos* for humanity and still have space to discuss praxes of mission. Therefore, I leave it to others to critique my summary of humans as narrative and ecclesial multi-beings. In addition, a more comprehensive account of the role of the Holy Spirit is in order, as well as the development of a relational theory of atonement..

What I do want to stress and hope I have achieved is this: that a relational anthropology spurs radically different praxes of mission, especially to people familiar to the evangelical movement, since these praxes are non-dualistic, non-individualistic, and non-propositional. If the

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[86] Shanshan Du, *'Chopsticks Only Work in Pairs': Gender Unity and Gender Equality among the Lahu of Southwest China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 41-44, 79-135.
[87] Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, pp. 191, 269.

theologies and praxes proposed are still evangelical as the term is narrowly understood has not been my concern.[88] More importantly, I hope to have shown that soteriology is about being involved in the embodied witness of the church in the world by working towards reconciliation of every breach in relationship.

Øyvind Hadland is a PhD research fellow in Theology of Mission
at the Norwegian School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger

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[88] For an argument that Grenz is not evangelical, consult Steven Knowles, *Beyond Evangelicalism: The Theological Methodology of Stanley J. Grenz* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010).

The Incarnation as Mode of Political Engagement with the City

Daniel R. Karistai

Abstract: This essay seeks to imagine the shape and style of a community that is formed by the Incarnation of God. It begins with a brief study of St. Athanasius' theology of the Incarnation with a particular focus on the renewed stability of our human condition through the dramatic event of the Word made flesh. This account of Athanasius' metaphysic is the framework for the remainder of the essay, which is divided up into the 'style' and 'shape' of the 'incarnational community'. The former focuses on the questions of presence and location. The latter offers three loci of reference for the incarnational community: Eucharist, prayer and hospitality.

Keywords: Eucharist, Community, Hospitality, Athanasius, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

'Humankind was created for communion, but is everywhere divided'.[1]

Introduction

The opening quote speaks to the heart of the problem to which this essay responds. We live our lives largely estranged from one another and our contemporary urban landscape is rife with socio-economic, religious, sexual, and racial divisions. Here in the United States we have seen this past year minority communities who have spent years being brutalised and oppressed by an increasingly militarised police force rise up in both violent and non-violent resistance.[2] Particularly in reference to race, essays have been written and popularised on what needs to happen in order to heal our country's wounds.[3] How do we go about it, though? The argument of this essay is that Christian communities have a metaphysical and narrative construct in the Incarnation that provides a compass for navigating the socio-economic, religious, sexual, and racial tensions that afflict our cities. It is through the Incarnation that reconciliation is possible and the strange can be made familiar.

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[1] William T. Cavanaugh, 'The City: Beyond Secular Parodies', in *Radical Orthodoxy*, eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pinkstock and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 182.
[2] I am, of course, referring to the protests and riots that occurred in the wake of the killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, Eric Garner in New York City, and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland.
[3] Ta-Neisi Coats, 'The Case for Reparations', *The Atlantic*, June 2014, accessed 30 July, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/.

The argument is broken down into two sections. The first is a survey of Athanasius' metaphysic and anthropology in his argument for the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. For Athanasius, humanity was originally on an ascent toward communion with the Divine. Sin was the interruption of that ascent and led to an ontological instability in the human condition from which we could not recover on our own. Direct intervention on behalf of the Trinitarian community was necessary in order to restore an estranged creation back to the divine communion. The second part takes this theological construct and offers some starting points on what it could look like for a Christian community to live incarnationally. I will offer three loci of reference for the incarnational community to practice: Eucharist, prayer, and 'kenotic hospitality'. The main thrust here is that the church has the capacity to overcome whatever cultural divide it is encountering by imitating the event when the Word became flesh and the story of how this God-Man lived amongst us.

Athanasius: Incarnation as Event and Story

This portion on Athanasius will be partitioned into two sections. I will start by drawing out three portraits from his treatise *On the Incarnation*[4] in order to frame what the Incarnation looks like for Athanasius. The other partition will be primarily concerned with the structure of his incarnational metaphysic. In the first portrait Athanasius creates an allegory of a king's relationship with a city to explain how the Word abolished death through the Incarnation. In one instance a king visits a large city and stays in someone's home. Even though the king dwells in only one home, the city simultaneously gains a bit of prestige and destructive forces (enemies and robbers) are prevented from damaging the city. [5] The singular directly affected the many. In the same way:

> The King of all has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many, and in consequence the designs of the enemy against humankind have been foiled and the corruption of death, which formerly held them in its power, has simply ceased to be.[6]

The second depiction Athanasius evokes is the process of restoring a painting that has become stained:

> You know what happens when a portrait that has been painted on a panel becomes obliterated through external stains. The artist does not throw away the

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[4] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation: New Edition,* rev., trans. by A Religious of C.S.M.V. (Yonkers, N.Y.: St. Vladmir's Seminary Press, 1996), pp. 31-47.
[5] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, p. 35.
[6] Ibid.

panel, but the subject of the portrait has to come and sit for it again, and then the likeness is re-drawn on the same material.[7]

In order to save us all from death a re-creation was necessary. The Incarnation is the Word sitting in for the Painter to restore the original painting. The sitting in, the dwelling and renewing are narrative elements and we can see this second metaphor of the Incarnation as a story.

Athanasius' third description for the Incarnation is more straightforward. That is, the Word became an 'object for the senses' for us all so that we 'might apprehend the Father through the works which He…did in the body'.[8] In addition to the Incarnation being an event and a story, it is also praxis. The works of Jesus, his life and ministry, revealed the nature and character of the Father to his disciples. In turn, by emulating both the manner in which the Word became flesh and Christ's works on earth, the church reveals to the rest of the world the restored image of God.

Incarnation as Event

Athanasius' work *On the Incarnation* is his most recognisable and accessible theological treatise we have today.[9] It is also quite difficult to suggest a precise date for when it was written. Without weighing in on that debate this essay will at least presuppose that this work was written prior to his *Orations against the Arians* and after the council of Nicaea in 325.[10] The motive for situating Athanasius' works chronologically is to give us both perspective and coherence to his theology. The metaphysical arguments Athanasius made in *On the Incarnation* is symbiotically related to his exegetical arguments against 'the Arians'[11] later on in his career.[12] Here both coherence and perspective come into better focus in the sense that while we can speak of the Incarnation as event in terms of Athanasius' metaphysic found in *On the Incarnation* separate from his later engagements with the Arians, the two are closely interrelated. There are two basic features that distinguish *On the Incarnation* from the rest of his works. First and most obviously, this work makes no mention of Arius or the Arians. Second, his 'soteriological vision' of his later works 'is given foundational systematic expression in *Against the Greeks-On the Incarnation*' where the relationship between God and creation (with an acute Christological focus) is to 'be considered as the

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[7] Ibid., pp. 41-42.
[8] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, p. 43.
[9] Ibid., pp. 9-10 for C. S. Lewis' classic introduction to this text.
[10] Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 27-31.
[11] For the remainder of this essay this phrase is only meant to reflect the way Athanasius referred to this movement polemically. For two thorough historical accounts of Athanasius' construction of 'Arianism' see Lewis Ayres, *Nicea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 105-130 and David Gwynn, *The Eusebians: Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the 'Arian Controversy'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[12] Anatolios, *Athanasius*, p. 39.

architectonic centre of Athanasius' theological vision'.[13]Anatolios organises this vision with a trajectory that begins with Athanasius' anthropology, God's relational ontology, sin, and the Incarnation of the Word.

Athanasius' anthropology has its basis in the ontological instability of creation. That is, creation *ex nihilo* as 'the radical nothingness which underlies human existence and indicates humanity's inherent lack of self-possessed being'.[14] Creation's radical nothingness is only the first part of the equation, however. This corruptible nature is equally complemented by the gift of grace; the ability to participate in the divine life. The human condition consists of a dialectic of unqualified contingency and being 'radically gifted'.[15] Humanity is 'ordained…to rise above itself and maintain its being by virtue of its "conversation with God"…'[16] The *telos* for humanity is a heavenly ascent in perfect relationship with God. This also means that God is a relational being. For it is out of God's good, generous nature that he created humanity (as well as the rest of creation) and then out of desire for relationship he gifted humanity with the ability to participate in communion with himself.[17] Athanasius does not deny the apophatic condition between Creator and Creation but argues that the divine, creative love 'overcomes the natural disparity between the God who is and the creation that comes to be from nothing'. [18] The original intention to overcome this 'ontological distance' is the dialectical correspondence between God's condescension to humanity and humanity's ascension to God. [19] The situation which Athanasius names 'The Divine Dilemma'[20] is when this correspondence became profoundly interrupted by sin.

Athanasius thus frames sin in terms of orientation. The constitution of humanity's original condition was a 'self-transcending' hierarchy ascent between the body, mind and soul. The body is the starting point of Godward ascent. The mind is the 'locus of communion with God', and the soul's function is to pilot the orientation of the body to the mind's communion with God.[21] The interior life of each human being was ordered to participate in harmonious relationship with God. 'Sin, however, is a movement in the "opposite direction" in which the mind orients itself toward the body…inverting the proper teleology of the human structure'.[22]

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[13] Ibid., pp. 39-40.
[14] Anatolios, 2004, p. 41. Also cf. Anatolios 1998, pp. 55-56.
[15] Anatolios, 2004, p. 42.
[16] Ibid., p. 44.
[17] Ibid., p. 41.
[18] Ibid. cf. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, pp. 27-29.
[19] Anatolios, 2004, p. 44. Also cf. Anatolios, 1998, pp. 32-36.
[20] Athanasius, 1996, pp. 31-47.
[21] Anatolios, 2004, p. 46.
[22] Ibid.

Through sin humanity became inwardly focused. Rather than divine ascent humanity began its descent to the *nihilo*. Within this framework 'sin is quite literally a process of "de-creation"'.[23] De-creation brings into sharp focus the Divine Dilemma. Athanasius asks, 'What was God to do in face of this dehumanising of mankind, this universal hiding of the knowledge of Himself by the wiles of evil spirits?'[24] Not only would humanity's destruction be a defeat for itself but God's glory is also deeply implicated in this inversion.[25] For Athanasius, redemption from de-creation was both necessary and could only be accomplished 'by the same philanthropic creative power of the Word, a power that is not vulnerable to the inherent nothingness of all created nature'.[26]

The Incarnation 'represents the renewal of the relation between God and humanity in a way that confirms the original structure of the relation, in which there is a correlative emphasis between divine activity and human receptivity to this activity'.[27] Renewal is characterised by 'stability, security and "remaining"'.[28] The *charis* of divine participation through Christ stabilises the human condition and rescues the person from his or her sinful descent into *nihilo*. The self-transcending hierarchy is restored. The security is found in the immutability of this stability in Christ.[29] What was accomplished in Jesus' death and resurrection—the abolition of death itself—could not be undone and the gift of being able to participate once again in the Word guarantees this reality. Stability and security point to the theme of 'remaining' that Athanasius employs from the Gospel of John. As was stated earlier, Athanasius' anthropology saw the prelapsarian human condition as being pulled in one of two directions: ascent into the divine life or descent into *nihilo*. The power of sin 'lies in its capacity to lead humanity into the condition of "remaining" in its orientation to nothingness'.[30] Humanity's liberation into participation in the divine life was only made both possible and definitive through the Word's 'humanization, death and resurrection'.[31] With this metaphysical framework of Athanasius in place this would be a good point, as we have already started to do, to shift our attention to the story of the Incarnation.

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[23] Anatolios, 2004, p. 48.
[24] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, p. 40.
[25] Anatolios, 2004, pp. 50-51.
[26] Ibid., p. 51.
[27] Anatolios, 1998, p. 68.
[28] Anatolios, 2004, pp. 61-66.
[29] Athanasius, 1996, p. 35.
[30] Anatolios, 2004, p. 63.
[31] Ibid.

Incarnation as Story

Athanasius' theology of the Incarnation was not only a metaphysical argument but it was also a reality deeply entrenched in scripture. *On the Incarnation* serves as a good example because Athanasius' metaphysic is developed within the overarching scriptural narrative of Creation, Fall, Incarnation, Jesus' Life, Death, Resurrection and the Re-creation of the cosmos. Athanasius situates the event of the Incarnation in the centre of what he calls the 'scope of scripture'.[32] All of scripture points to the event of the Creator-Word becoming human for our salvation. This would be Athanasius' hermeneutical key in his later works that were more exegetically oriented and 'preoccupied with refuting anti-Nicene proof-texts and devising right minded interpretations of these texts that are consistent with Nicene doctrine'.[33] Most of Athanasius' work is consumed with the 'ontological mutuality' between the Father and the Son. The two are separate beings but are 'proper' to each other. They are distinct personalities but are not ontologically different in the same way creation is different from Creation.[34] The Holy Spirit is mentioned only once in the final line of *On the Incarnation*.[35]Anatolios remarks that 'while Athanasius was able to integrate the Holy Spirit into his doctrines of God and redemption at a later point, such an integration is not evident in the apologetic double treatise'.[36] In his *Orations* the divinity of the Spirit is an implied subtext in his arguments for the Son's equality with the Father.[37] His argument here references the Spirit to demonstrate the Son's equality with the Father. Yes, the Son was both anointed and cast out demons by the Spirit but that does not indicate that Jesus' divinity was lessened 'on account of his flesh' because the Son's equality with the Spirit is demonstrated in Jesus' promise of sending the Paraclete. If it was the Son who sent the Spirit, the Son must therefore be equal to the Giver. Within this argument for the Son's equality with the Father, Athanasius also presumes the Son's equality with the Spirit. By way of transitive property, the Holy Spirit must also be divine. It would not be until the end of his career that Athanasius would have an occasion to make explicit what has been implicit in his works.[38] In his *Letters*, appealing again to the *skopos* of Scripture, 'Athanasius extends his own ontological vocabulary' to include the proper relationship of the Spirit with what he previously stated to be true of the Father and the Son. The three belong to one another by nature while simultaneously being 'truly distinct

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[32] Athanasius *Against the Arians*, 3:29. The entire passage can be found in Anatolios, 2004, pp. 81-82.
[33] Anatolios, 2004, p. 39.
[34] Anatolios, 2004, pp. 76-77.
[35] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, p. 96.
[36] Anatolios, 1998, p. 45.
[37] Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, 1:50, from Anatolios, 2004, pp. 107-108.
[38] For historical background of Athanasius' *Letters to Serpion*, cf. Anatolios, 1998, pp. 90-92.

subsistents'.[39]The triune community of God freely and graciously liberates humanity from death and continues to sustain the life of the church. The question the rest of this essay will seek to answer concerns political engagement. What could, or should, a public theology formed by the Incarnation thus understood look like?

The Incarnational Community

The event of the Incarnation was a community affair of the Triune Godhead directly engaging with the estranged creation. The event and story of the Incarnation is the sole foundation for Christian community because it revealed to humanity the character and will of the divine community. Dietrich Bonhoeffer argues that 'Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this…we belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ'.[40] Christian community is a common life we share with others who participate in the saving grace of God. The term 'incarnational community' is therefore synonymous with 'Christian community' or 'the church'. It is important to recognise that there exists a certain schismatic nature of the Incarnation. Rowan Williams points out that the story of Jesus' life is 'part of a history marked by a strong dimension of conflict' where Jesus constantly confronts competing forms of identity in his followers. [41] The Incarnation also separates us from our own idealism and vision of what a Christian community should be.

> The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such dreams… A community, which cannot bear and cannot survive such a crisis, which insists upon keeping its illusion when it should be shattered, permanently loses in that moment the promise of Christian community. Sooner or later it will collapse.[42]

It is both good and right for Bonhoeffer to disabuse his readers of their attachment to their own set of ideals surrounding what Christian community must be like. Any sort of utopic vision we concoct and to which we attempt to make the Christian community conform is not only a hindrance to the maturation of that community but can result in collapse if those ideals are not relinquished. Bonhoeffer argues that the Christian community 'is not an ideal which we must realise; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in

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[39] Anatolios, 2004, pp. 82-83.
[40] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper One, 1954), p. 21.
[41] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 229.
[42] Bonhoeffer, 1954, pp. 26-27.

which we may participate'.[43] Participation in the Christian community requires complete subordination to Christ. It calls for the participator's schism from any other form of allegiance in order to be properly bound together in the fellowship made available through Christ. This does not mean these social relations and ideals ought to be abolished, however. Williams comments, 'The persons who are involved in the community of the Kingdom are not "new creations" in the sense of having all their relationships and affiliations cancelled'[44] but rather the sovereignty those relational ties typically have over the person is radically subverted by Christ. The Christian seeks to put those social affinities in the service of Christ in an effort to advance what Williams calls the 'unrestricted community'. 'Unrestricted' in the sense that the Christian community busts through the taboos of other social boundaries because 'the world we inhabit is the potential scope of the community that is created by relation to Jesus'.[45] This means that the Christian community is fundamentally a political space that, as Richard Hays puts it 'is called to embody an alternative order that stands as a sign of God's redemptive purposes in the world'.[46]

Style: Liturgical Presence and Location

The embodiment of an alternative social order is the creation of presence. The question is how the Incarnational community's presence can be sustained, thrive, and actively resist that which attempts to disappear it? As a starting point, this involves recovering the meaning of *religio* before modernity's manufacturing of religion.[47] *Religio* was quite different from our modern understanding of religion because the former inherently belonged in the public arena. *Religio* was an expected form of social and political participation. When the term was originally translated into the English 'religion' in the thirteenth century it defined 'a state of life bound by monastic vows'.[48] By the fifteenth century 'religion' became a standard way of describing monastic orders like the Benedictines.[49] Although 'religion' is at this point more readily identifiable with Religion as genus there are still some important distinctions between the two. First, *religio* is not a collection of propositions to be believed in the same way a religion as genus is constituted.[50] The post-Enlightenment understanding of religion was primarily doctrinal while *religio* was a term to describe a way of life. The

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[43] Ibid., p. 30.
[44] Williams, 2000, pp. 236-237.
[45] Ibid., pp. 231-232.
[46] Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross and New Creation* (New York: Harper One, 1996), pp. 196-197.
[47] See William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 60-69.
[48] Ibid., p. 64.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., p. 66.

other important distinction between the two is that *religio* elevates the personal piety of the individual to the strata of public and communal participation. It reifies doctrine and translates it into a complex system of virtue that cultivates the character of the worshipping community. *Religio* is the composite of storytelling, ritual, and the formation of virtue. The incarnational community cultivates its own political space when it integrates 'true *religio*' into its lifestyle. In this way the incarnational community takes on a liturgical style, it becomes liturgically present.

Where is the incarnational community to be located? There is a convincing argument to be made that implicit in the Incarnation is a call to downward mobility. The central theme of the drama for Athanasius is of God's initial descent to meet the ascending humanity in order to participate in community. Those who advocate for downward mobility to be the central *ethos* of the Christian community argue that the condition of much of the Western church is transcendent from the world's suffering, poverty and persecution. This transcendent condition can then be overcome by emulating God's own incarnation into poverty and vulnerability. The location for such a move is what Sr. Margaret M. Mckenna calls 'the abandoned places of empire'.[51]

This sort of location, she comments, 'is left alone by the political, economic, and social powers that be. Deserts and wastelands are abandoned places. So are inner cities, some of the loneliest places on earth'.[52] To put it differently, the socio-economic and physical state of the many inner cities is in large part due to their abandonment by the wealthy, powerful, and otherwise elite. It is due to the transformation of the inner city from residential communities to business centres and resulting in social atomism and inter-urban polarisation.[53] The effects of these changes in the inner city were the eviction of residents, isolation of certain parts of the city from the wider urban context, the consumption of public resources which would otherwise go to community construction, and the deepening of inter-urban tensions as a result from competing for said resources. The sites that were created in these new zones were made safe, sanitary, and hospitable to the growing leisure and tourist culture. The city essentially became a simulated version of what it once was for the tourist to enjoy.[54] What of those who were not privileged enough to keep up with these changes in the urban landscape, the eventual 'white flight to the suburbs',[55] and the economic collapse of the

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[51] Margret M. McKenna, 'Mark I: Relocation to the Abandoned Places of Empire*',* The Rutba House (ed.), *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2005), pp. 10-25.
[52] Ibid., p. 15.
[53] Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 57-58.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., p. 241.

urban centre when the industrial complex relocated overseas in the advent of late capitalism? They have no other choice but to remain in the places others have abandoned. The call for downward mobility in the church is an inward appeal to relinquish her own transcendent condition, relocate to the abandoned places of the empire, and exist in solidarity with the citizens that remain after both industry and tourist leave. 'Remaining' is a critical concept of the incarnational engagement and it is directly linked with Athanasius' concept of 'remaining'. Just as the renewal and restoration of the human condition hinges on remaining in communion with Christ the renewal and restoration of these spaces requires the incarnationally engaged church to remain in community with those otherwise abandoned to obscurity and nothingness.

This is a persuasive argument with genuine prophetic force that the transcendent church ought to heed. I would add a caveat here because to equate downward mobility with the Incarnation is to neglect half of the story. The Incarnation is also a story of human ascent. In the same way that God's divine descent was not an end in of itself, downward mobility should not be the end of the horizon. The horizon for the incarnational community is to aid in the liberation of others from their isolation, self-indulgences, societal oppression and into a renewed participation in the divine economy of faith, hope, and love. Jesus' commission to go to the ends of the earth means that every person is called into community with God. The location, then, for the incarnational community is everywhere.

Shape: Eucharist, Prayer and Hospitality

The incarnational community is an embodied 'remaining' in the city that orbit three loci of reference for its formation and sustainability. The first locus of reference is the practice of the Eucharist because it is both a formative and politically charged ritual. Cavanaugh has done some considerable work in exposing the motives of modernity to disappear the church into a non-spatial private realm and creating the argument for how the Eucharist can be an active mode of resistance by constituting community and shaping our consumptive desires. [56] Cavanaugh's claim is that the 'Eucharist makes real the presence of Christ both in the elements and in the body of believers. The church becomes the very body of Christ'.[57] This is *corpus mysticum*, which has three levels of distinction: One, the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth; two, the body presented in the Eucharistic sacrament. The third is the church.[58] Although the last two are temporally separated from the historical body of Jesus they are nonetheless joined together liturgically in the breaking of the bread and drinking of the cup. This

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[56] See Cavanaugh, 'The City', pp. 182-200.
[57] William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998), p. 205.
[58] Ibid., p. 212.

is a ritual in which the Christian community comes together to re-member (*anamnesis*) the story of Christ's passion and anticipates 'the future completion of the Kingdom Christ inaugurated'.[59] Through the act of *anamnesis* and the performance of this ritual the temporal divide between the sacramental body, ecclesial body, and historical body of Christ is crossed. In the Eucharist event the past, present and future capitulate into a singular divine moment where the Kingdom-as-political space is made tangible. We are not only participating in communion with the Divine but also with those across the world who profess the same allegiance to the Risen Lord. This practice is profoundly formative for the incarnational community because it constantly calls us to question who we are, the nature of our relationships with our neighbour, and other pressures that attempt to solicit our political allegiances. In the Eucharist the stranger is made into a brother or sister, estrangements are reconciled, and the community is formed around the story of the Incarnation.

The second locus is 'prayer', which is a rather broad category. The type of prayer I want to focus in on here is contemplative prayer or the contemplative life. Using the work of Martin Laird, the contemplative life is essential to a story-formed community engaged in cultural hermeneutics. Laird's first point is that our entire being is and has always been grounded in God. He comments, 'If we are to discover for ourselves who we truly are…the discovery is going to be a manifestation of the ineffable mystery of God'.[60] He calls this grounding our 'Christ-self' and the task of the contemplative life, the practice of contemplative prayer, is to become more fully aware of our identity in Christ.[61] The struggle for gaining awareness of the Christ-self is turning off 'the interior video'.[62] This is a metaphor for all of the narratives in our lives which subvert or replace our sense of identity in Christ. The contemplative life is a discipline that re-arranges those narratives in a way that fixes Christ at the centre of who we are. When Christ becomes the interlocutor for everything else, the way we view the world and our understanding of how we ought to inhabit it is conformed to the story of the Incarnation. For the incarnational community, contemplative prayer is a mode of cultural hermeneutics because it takes seriously the question of cultural transformation by suspending cultural narratives that define crucial terms like 'freedom', 'justice', 'love' and reflect critically on those narratives against the story of the Incarnation. The culturally engaged and critically reflective community is also a contemplative one.

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[59] Cavanaugh, 1998, p. 226.
[60] Martin Laird, O.S.A. *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 9.
[61] Ibid., pp. 11-13.
[62] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

The final locus is what I am calling 'kenotic hospitality'. Claudio Carvalhaes distinguishes between two types of hospitality: conditional and unconditional (or absolute).[63] Conditional hospitality is characterised by emphasising the amount of risk that is involved when welcoming the stranger.

> In order to know whether the *arrivant*…is a guest or enemy, there must be a set of structures and distinctions that must turn this *arrivant* into a knowable other as a way of distinguishing those who are not the same and keeping the space of arrive on this side of the border safe.[64]

In the act of hospitality the host is exposed to the potential danger of the unknown. As the stranger becomes more familiar and the host is better able to judge whether this new person is a friend or foe, the conditions change. The negotiations that take place between host and stranger are centrally concerned with preserving the sovereignty of the host. This negotiation is both an important and inescapable component of hospitality. Carvalhaes points out that 'borders are not only necessary, they are vital to our safety, survival and development'.[65] The question here is not over whether borders should exist but rather how many and how stringent the host's conditions are before hospitality can take place. The tension becomes clearer when exploring the possibility of unconditional hospitality. Unconditional hospitality requires the unqualified hosting of the stranger. It means 'to wait for the *arrivant* who is coming from beyond the horizon…it is to be caught by surprise, unprepared, in unexpected ways and yet, be ready to offer hospitality without complaining'.[66] Unconditional hospitality represents an openness and total vulnerability to whomever may arrive on our doorstep. It is also ultimately impossible to realise and we sit somewhere on a spectrum between these two poles. It is the argument here that the incarnational community is one that seeks to journey toward unconditional hospitality for the purpose of making the strange familiar. The mode in which this form of hospitality is practiced and developed is derived from the first part of the 'Christ Hymn' found in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

> (3) Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; (4) do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (5) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself (*kenoo*), taking the form of a bond-servant,

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[63] Claudio Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2013), pp. 23-29.
[64] Ibid., p. 24. '*Arrivant*' is translated into English as 'newcomer'. Derrida and Carvalhaes use the phrase here to denote the *arrivant* as the stranger.
[65] Ibid., p. 27.
[66] Ibid.

and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.[67]

Technically the Christ Hymn begins at verse five and goes through verse eleven but this is the surrounding context for *kenosis*. Before connecting *kenosis* to hospitality a couple of points need to be established. First, there is some debate over the function of this passage in the wider context of the whole letter.[68] In agreement with Gordon Fee's assessment, this passage is meant to be paradigmatic.[69] Paul is pointing to Christ's posture of humility as a prototype for the newly formed 'citizens of heaven'[70] to imitate. *Kenoo* (literally translated as to empty, make empty) is best interpreted as a metaphor that describes Christ wilfully 'accepting that vocation which led to the real humiliation of his incarnation and finally his death on the cross'.[71]

The theological question that seems to dominate any discussion of this passage is, therefore, what was Christ emptied of? Oliver Crisp offers a helpful survey of how others have attempted to answer this question and places the various responses in two general camps: 'ontological' and 'functional' *kenosis*.[72] He concludes the discussion with suggesting that a better question could be asked. Rather than inquiring what Christ relinquished in the Incarnation the focus should be put on what He 'took on'. That is, the Word took on the likeness of humanity. Crisp's argument is that we need not assume the Word lost something in the Incarnation. A fuller account of the event emphasises the hypostatic union of the historical Jesus and the Word where 'the human nature of Christ retains those properties which express the limitations of the knowledge, power, etc., of his human nature, while being indwelt by the divine nature of the Word'.[73] The union between the two, although mysterious, explains *kenosis* in a way that accounts for the physical limitations Jesus of Nazareth experienced without requiring either the abdication of the Word's divinity (ontological *kenosis*) or the Word's temporary adjournment from the divine Trinitarian community (functional *kenosis*). The Word took on humanity and radically exposed our own ontological instability in His Passion. The 'taking on'

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[67] Philippians 2:3-8, NASB. Italics mine.

[68] See Gordon Fee, *NICNT: Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), p. 348, en. 14; Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 187-271; and Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed. Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), pp. 92-117.

[69] Fee, 1995, p. 335.

[70] Philippians 1:27.

[71] O'Brien, 1991, p. 217.

[72] See Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 118-153, for how he defines these two schools of thought and his response to each.

[73] Ibid., p. 150.

involved with *kenosis* is the practice of humility while being grounded in 'the fullness of grace and truth'.[74]

Kenotic hospitality, then, is an orientation toward an authentically open table. It is a political engagement of humility and vulnerability. It is a relinquishing of our individualistic sense of sovereignty for the sake of participation in community with both the strange and familiar. This form of hospitality holds no pretence and involves a palpable risk of rejection and hurt because all parties are given the freedom to come to the table precisely as they are. *Kenotic* engagement takes it a step further by 'taking on' the stranger in the form of genuine empathy with the other. When we empathise with another's plight, struggle, and even profound joy we participate, in some degree, with the way they experience and see their world. It is a humanising transformation of the other with the potent ability to reconcile estrangement. It is a radical openness toward the possibilities available when we receive anyone who might come into our lives.

Conclusion

In the prologue to John's Gospel, he wrote that although the world was made though God, the world did not know God and so the Word became flesh. In order for that which was dark to be illuminated, God chose to inhabit the world and walked among us. Jesus revealed to humanity what life in communion with God is like and how we could come to know that from which we are originally estranged. We, the church, can speak of God from the places abandoned by empire by inhabiting these spaces in the same way God chose to inhabit this world. Incarnational engagement is a life in community that lives in special reference to Eucharist, prayer, and *kenotic* hospitality. These focal points provide the political grounding for the coalescence of an incarnational community. The necessary space for critical reflection and the re-telling of our particular narrative in conjunction with and even against the formative narratives of our surrounding cultures is made possible. The habitual practice of these three disciplines creates a *modus operandi* for the incarnational community to welcome the stranger (hospitality), realise common ground for cultural engagement (prayer), and unifies the community into a social body on grounds that are much more stable than a Hobbesian social contract (Eucharist). These practices simultaneously equip the community to inhabit unfamiliar territory (the places abandoned by empire) and sustain the community's abiding presence through the thoughtful, engaged participation in the story of the Incarnation. The divide between the known walls of the church and the estranged, abandoned places in the city can be crossed by the effort of the incarnational

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[74] John 1:14, NASB.

community whose habits and rituals orbit these three loci. We are invited to participate in the Adamic act that Jesus began when he renamed the bread as his body; the poor as the rich; the least as the greatest; the blessed as the ones who mourn, are persecuted, and make peace. The Incarnation began the process of renaming the world and we are invited to participate in that task until the work is consummated in the creation of the New Jerusalem, the City of God. It is a life that involves the steady rhythm of gathering for the Eucharist and contemplative engagement. It is also a life of dispersal and hospitality; the action of pouring ourselves out, taking on the other, and making the strange familiar. It is a process of knowing and being known, of naming and being named as we journey toward to new city God is building on the horizon. Cultural transformation happens on this journey and it is in this way that the incarnational community demonstrates for the city what it has the potential to become.

Daniel R. Karistai
Postgraduate student at IBTS Prague